

First Impressions

Compiled Report Form



Community Visited: Washington Date(s) Visited: a) October 6 (Saturday)
b) October 8 (Holiday Monday)
c) October 22 (Monday)

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. Obtaining information about Washington, Kansas was simple, no issues. I did not feel that the web information I found was inaccurate to the community it represented. I greatly appreciated their "Calendar of Events" as it is something that would help anyone who lived in Washington or was passing through to see what was going on. From not only school information, but also community events.
- b. The website was good. Easily accessed and maneuvered, but a lot of stuff I wish I could see was left off. Also, I don't think that the first click on the website should be about online payment available something else on the front page! I went there on October 8th and nothing was listed as being closed down, but most things were. Also, should list things like your monthly City Council meeting in the calendar. I like that you have info on permits and licenses and also the water reports on the website for easy access! I like the Moving to Town section. Maybe something there about a recreation program for the kids if there is one? More pictures would be a great addition – add the mayor of Munchkin Land house on there – to tie in with the Munchkin Land park, cool point of interest.
- c. N/A

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. Upon entering Washington, the first things I noticed from 3 of the 4 entrances in town was negative. Negative in that from entering the south highway into town, there is a rather large car dump. It was not appealing to the eye. But once you passed that, I was pleasantly surprised. The community was much larger by means of businesses, traffic, and homes in comparison to our own. For the most part upon my “first impression,” the community is very nice. They have a lot to offer. Downtown was clean, well groomed, and very cute. Businesses with very few exceptions were well kept. There was a business that had many golf carts that stood out. It could stand to be cleaned up, because it definitely appeared to be one of few businesses leaving the community looking “dumpy” for lack of better words. The streets near and around the hospital and care home should be better maintained. It was not an entire town issue, but specifically it could be seen as needing the most work.
- b. Quaint little community. Love the small town feel and the red brick roads in the main section of town. Very nice town center area. Though the initial drive up does not really show what exists behind it (and maybe some privacy fencing or a tree line around the salvage yard would help the initial drive in beautification). I have driven through many times on our way to Nebraska and would never have known that the quaint little town was there. Loved the welcome signs! Maybe something to point to the rest of the city though, that it exists. Arrow type sign to show direction of school/hospital etc.
- c. Driving up to the town I would have thought it was just another small farming town, but there was a large sign on my right hand side that pointed right to the business district.

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. Buildings in the downtown area were tidy. Overall it appears Washington takes very good care of their downtown area. The landscaping and roads were charming. I especially loved some of the old brick roads. I observed many different businesses. I was surprised to see so many chiropractor and eye doctors readily available in the downtown area. From banks, to a meat locker, real estate, to corporations such as Dollar General, to insurance agencies, most all businesses were well groomed. As previously mentioned, the tire place and business with old golf carts could stand to clean up their blight issues. We went in to Casey’s General Store and the retired folks were at all the tables eating lunch and visiting. They were courteous and smiled. The cashier was an older lady and she was so sweet to tell us briefly about Washington and very much hospitable.

- b. Love the red brick roads! City Hall very nice and stately looking. I love the main street look, but very sad that most of the buildings were empty. Looked like lots of repair businesses and salvage yards. Great looking healthcare and veterinary facilities. School looked impressive. Liked that the city has its own newspaper – added to the hometown feel. Great service dog training facility – shows the town is interested in contributing to the rest of the world and not just internal. Also really love the Friendly Corners outreach program – it looked full at lunch time! Looked like a lot of businesses in the area, good vocational jobs available the trailer factory. Also saw Marcon Pies is there, but just happened upon it. Maybe more signage for it?

I was looking for a place to have lunch while I was there. It was a rainy day and I REALLY wanted to try out Mayberry's – my husband has been there and bragged about it a LOT, so I specifically planned to be there at lunch time. Very disappointed to find that it was closed and the only places to have lunch were the 2 gas stations.... While searching I walked into the brewery (which was not open, but the door was open). A very nice female employee asked me to wait in the restaurant portion while she got her boss. Brad was fantastic and took an hour of his time telling me all about the town and the school and other points of interest in town. He gave me a tour of the brewery and even invited my husband and me to come and have a beer on him one night when they are open.

He gave me the story about the shops that he owned closing and we chatted about what could be done to get them advertised and reopened (maybe with some retiring or ETSing military that could get VA business startup plans).

Went on to Casey's and got a sandwich – the clerk tolerated me pulling her away from her conversation.

- c. While driving into town, my eyes were drawn to these banners on each of the street poles that stated "Welcome to Washington." All the main and/or older down town streets were either cobblestone or brick.

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. We drove through the park where it appeared to be well kept, shower/restrooms were available; however we used the facilities at gas stations. There were many maintained public restrooms throughout the community and my travel companion needed handicapped restrooms so that was convenient for us. Parking was very easy. Lots of parking at each business, even for a Saturday morning. The sidewalks were well kept and easy for anyone to walk down them, even handicapped.
- b. I did not have issues parking, but looks like it would be more optimal if not "one way" oriented slanted parking, instead of straight on. I had to drive down, and turn around to park on the other side of the road rather than be able to turn right in. (main street)
- c. N/A

3. Other Retail Shopping Areas

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

- a. There were several businesses along the downtown strip. Many healthcare related, so we did not venture in to any. Dollar General was easily accessible off the main road.
- b. I didn't see many open retail stores. I thought the grocery store was a thrift shop until I went in!
- c. After driving around the city for about 5 or 10 minutes, I parked on the main street at the city hall building. I started my day at City Hall. The two women I spoke to were very helpful. After spending about 30-40 minutes with the clerk, I ended up with two pages of information about the city. I then took a walk and went to a few more offices/businesses on the main street. Talked with the clerk at the city newspaper and one of the owners and one of his realtors/agents from one of the three realtors in town. If I was planning on moving there, I would want to do more research on the housing market as they only had one house listed on the day of my visit in town, it was a 2 bedroom, 1 bathroom for \$88K. Then I got in my car and drove around to about 5 more businesses to check out some of the other services available to see what all was there.

4. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

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

- a. The industrial area and near the County Fairgrounds seemed to have some room for expansion. Nice park near there with lots of fun for children. The pool was very nice and the roads were not as nice, but I feel that is somewhat expected in an area such as that. I was surprised to see such a small camp ground area, but I imagine it fits the needs for a community that isn't located on the lake or near a large body of water. The river that ran through was roaring that day and very beautiful.
- b. Industrial parks look like they are all on one side of the road. Good diversity. Looks like there are lots of job opportunities within town and definitely a market for a diner or mom and pop type restaurant!!!
- c. Washington is a farming town. There were many tractor/farm implement businesses around town and in the country areas.

5. **Health Care Services**

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

- a. It appeared they have a fairly marketable hospital present in Washington. I imagine that comes with emergency services. There seemed to be only a handful of cars there working on a Saturday, but I imagine based on my online search that there is a wide range of services being offered there.
- b. Looked good – well advertised. Like that the clinic and nursing home are all right there together.
- c. I found Washington to have a lot to offer in the healthcare areas. Hospital, ER, 2 doctors, 2 chiropractors, 2 eye doctors, 1 dentist, and a nursing home facility. There also have a Pawnee Mental Health service and county health department. Plus there are veterinarian services in town.

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

- a. I did see multiple eye doctors, chiropractors, and obviously the hospital present with services for many parts of a family, to include dentistry. It appears that one would not have to travel outside the community for vision, dentistry, chiropractic, and general health needs. The Washington Clinic also seems to be able to service healthcare needs with various specialties available.
- b. I did not notice any signs for Optometry or Dental, I did see Veterinary services though!
- c. N/A

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

- a. We did see a long-term facility near the hospital. We were saddened by the condition of the building, windows, and the yard itself. Especially the multiple coffee cans overflowing with cigarette butts near the dumpster. That is these people's home and we certainly feel there should be a better way to contain the staff's habits. Maybe finding something of a privacy fence that would force staff to smoke and take breaks more privately would be appropriate. I also found while researching the community there is access to home health through the Health Department.
- b. There was a nursing home facility.
- c. N/A

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. Although I did not see many homes for sale or rent, I did see multiple areas which looked to service low income households. In our community, low income housing is lacking. It's such a benefit to Washington's community as it allows for more people with children to enjoy the experience of a smaller community. The homes appeared to be mostly maintained. I did see multiple neighborhoods where there would be beautiful homes and yards and next door homes that could stand to be painted or given TLC. Specifically, nice homes in one neighborhood and then one neighbor with a Ryder semi-trailer and overgrown brush. Blight on those properties should be addressed so that all of the neighborhood can enjoy its beauty.
- b. I saw a lot of diversity in housing – and mingled in together. There were a couple of newer housing sections, but in the main part of town very mixed. I did not see anything for rent, but there were several houses for sale in various price ranges. Not a whole lot for sale though. I did not see any kind of apartment buildings – might be a good addition for young newlyweds or recent college graduates to move to town.
- c. Three realtor offices in Washington but it covers the whole county. I spoke with one of the three offices and their office only had 1 house available for sales and NO rentals available at that time.

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 did not recall many areas to build new. As for homes to rent or buy, there were very few homes for sale. Online, there was a section for free lots for new builds, industry, and businesses. What an amazing idea to help bring people to the community.
- b. I did not see any rental properties.
- c. City Hall told me there are a few rental apartments/4 plex rental type places available (some are low income). They said there were 5 or 6 houses available for sale or rent that they knew of on the day of my visit.

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 appeared to be a Head Start, preschool, elementary and Jr/Sr high schools. I did not see any issues with size or buildings. Nice play grounds and from first appearance, inviting.
- b. The schools looked great! Nicely sized and wonderful playgrounds. Love that the Vocational school and Head Start were all in the same vicinity for easy access for parents with multiple age children drop off and pick up!
- c. Schools K-12 had 331 students. There is both a Head Start program and the community college extension program in Washington.

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

- a. I did search the school's website. It seems very family oriented and appealing. Lots to offer their community in the way of vocational, educational, and even with sports.
- b. Yes, and very descriptive!
- c. I was told at City Hall all educational information is available online.

8. Childcare

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

- a. As mentioned above there was a Head Start and preschool. I saw one recognizable in-home daycare that was very cute with a train. I was unable to locate that provider online. I was not able to find costs associated with childcare.
- b. I didn't see any daycare advertised (Child Care Aware contact online though), but I did see Head Start. Looked like a nice and large facility with a nice play area.
- c. Childcare services lists are available at City Hall but from what I understand there is a shortage of childcare facilities and/or openings.

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. There are many churches in the community of Washington. I believe I counted 7. Different denominations and some I were not sure if they were active congregations. The Catholic Church was the most impressive church. Parishioners were cleaning the yard and visible active working on their structure the day we were there. It was a beautiful sight to see them taking so much pride in their church.
- b. Good mix of different churches. Looked like all the buildings are active and the signage was good.
- c. Seven different churches available in the city of Washington- Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, non-denomination, and etc.

10. Civic

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

- a. I didn't particularly see any evidence of non-profits. I did see the most impressive KSDS Assistance Dogs campus. How wonderful and what a service to the community. Very well kept, nice buildings, and brings patrons to the community. I did not observe any evidence of civic organization activity.
- b. I would like to see what programs are available to kids in the area outside of school. Is there a 4-H program? Recreation Association? Boy/Girl Scouts? Maybe some information on these, as well as a contact number and meeting times/places would be good on the website? I saw evidence of activity in Friendly Corners.
- c. Yes, there were several bulletin boards around town with different functions, activities, groups, services, and many different things available in the community. I was very impressed with all the different informational bulletin boards that I saw around town. There are informational pamphlets that were available at the health department, library, and at City Hall. That was something that makes me want to find out more about the city and things to do there.

Public Infrastructure

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

- a. In general, it appears Washington is doing a great job keeping their community maintained. I looked all over hoping to find their city maintenance shop. It was not until we were leaving town, I noticed the public works area. It was nice that you couldn't see it in town. Just made the community look seamless.
- b. Things looked good once I got into town.
- c. Washington is the county seat for Washington County so all the county buildings/services are in the county building across from the city building. There is one three-day citywide clean up, with pick up services in front of house. If there is a bad storm in the city, they will do branch pick up. There is a city dump yard available for yard debris and city burning. Electric, water, and sewer are city owned and operated by the city. Gas, telephone, cable, and internet are all outside services. Trash service is contracted through the city and they use 4 different companies.

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

- a. We went on a Saturday, did not go in to the City Hall. Very nice building though.
- a. Town hall was closed when I went (Columbus Day), but looked very stately.
- b. Very helpful.

Police/fire protection:

- a. It appears they have EMS/Fire/Police available 24/7. Policing seems to be serviced by the county for the city?
- b. Looked like there was a good police department, I thought I saw a jail, but I think it was just a historic building with bars on the windows? Saw a large fire station as well.
- c. Washington has a voluntary Fire Department. Law enforcement is contracted through the county at a cost of \$500 per month and there is always an officer available 24/7.

Library:

- a. They did have a library. It seemed to be maintained and orderly. There was nice landscaping along the sidewalk.
- b. It was closed when I went.
- c. N/A

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

- a. I did not see parks close to the homes. The only park I noted that would seemingly belong to the city would be by the county fairgrounds. It was NICE and so was the pool. That would be a dream for Wakefield. I love the park and surrounding recreation areas!!!! I had to ask directions from Brad to find it though, a little hidden being across the highway. Thought it was just auction barns and fair type stuff until I drove back there. Might be cool if the munchkin mayor house could be moved over there and be co-located and advertised more. Nice pavilions!!! So many nice covered pavilions! Should advertise for family reunions and such. Is there a schedule? Rental fees? What a great place for a birthday party or family get together! I might even get my family to meet there this summer!! Nice pool and Splash Park. I really like that all of it is co-located, just sad that the kids have to cross the highway to get to it. I think maybe more child crossing signs for awareness for travelers just driving through? I would never have known when I drive through the area, just looks like businesses across the street.
- b. Thought the recreation area was awesome – just hidden and not advertised well! What great parks and good mix of activities you have!!! Put some signs out, I would not have known it was there just driving through.
- c. There is a city pool which costs \$90 for a family pass and \$45 for a single person pass. There are 2 city parks and 2 city wide yard sales per year.

11. 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. Museum, it was mentioned of highway 36 treasure hunt, we saw the home of the Mayor of Munchkin Land's Wizard of OZ former home.
- b. I hear there is a summer event called the Highway 36 Treasure Hunt, with a car show and sidewalk sales and such – maybe add a tab on your website for popular town events? Also it looks like there is a really nice farmers market in town, but no days/times when open. That might be good on the website also!
- c. There is a Fall Festival in Washington and the county fair is there yearly.

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 visible indicators.
- b. I just saw the farmers market stand.
- c. N/A

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

- a. I think the most significant draw to the public would be the highway 36 treasure hunt. I am familiar with this myself. I didn't however see any advertisement.
- b. Again, I think that moving the Munchkin Mayor house over by Munchkin Land and putting a sign at the main entrance of town would be a great draw.....if Marcon pies could have a little dining area where you could stop and get a slice of pie and cup of coffee while visiting it would make a great little day trip!
- c. N/A

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. I cannot recall to be honest.
- b. Did not see a visitor's center, but I'm sure if the City Hall was open I would have gone in and gotten the info. Brad was a wonderful, welcoming source of info!
- c. N/A

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

- a. I would like to come back to Washington during its Highway 36 treasure hunt. I only saw one sit-down restaurant. Game Time Sports Bar and Grill.
- b. See above day trip for pie and Munchkin Land!
- c. There's a brewery, campgrounds, bowling alley with a grill, 2 motels, a bar and grill, florist, Kier's Thriftway Market, Casey's and Short Stop for gas, fuel, and convenience stores, 2 pharmacies, 2 banks, service dog school, and a Dollar General.

12. Wrap-up

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

- a. I felt like as a whole, Washington is a very charming community. It appeared that the community is working hard to make it visibly appealing, the businesses are plenty, and the people are hospitable. I believe they have many more beautiful, clean homes than run-down homes and unkempt yards. The schools seem to be united and offer a lot. This community seems to be "holding their own". I much enjoyed my trip through Washington.
- b. Very quaint, hometown feel once I got back there! Some really great features with the sports and medical complexes! Also looks like good places to stay with the hotels and RV park if you wanted to stop and stay for a bit. Really like the veteran's monument when coming in from the Clay Center side.
- c. I will return to visit Washington as I would like to see more of their city and walk around yet again. Washington is a very cute small town, which I enjoyed my 4-5 hours there and look forward to returning again.

What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

- a. I would say one obstacle is getting the business leading in to the community from the south and the east to clean up so that when people enter in to town, the first thought isn't "what a dump," because the community as a whole certainly is not unsatisfying to the eye. There are some homes in which paint, yard work, and de-cluttering would improve the community as a whole. Blight is a very hard thing to correct, but in the long run it sure beautifies the community.
- b. HUGE - no restaurants!!!! No place for lunch or breakfast!!!! No meeting type places to sit and have a working lunch or civic meeting???
- c. My biggest let down was I was looking forward to and would have loved to grab a sandwich and/or coffee somewhere in town but nothing was open that early. I could see a coffee, baker/pantry, sandwich shop doing a very good business there. If I was to do this type of survey again I would start my day at least at 8 am and stay until 5 pm. I did pick a nice, sunny, warm, and beautiful day to visit.

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

- a. Positive. As mentioned before it is a lovely community. I do not believe it can be compared to Wakefield on any level though, as we can't offer near the businesses, health care options, or even the childcare facilities such as Head Start. This community is much more comparable to Clay Center.
- b. Munchkin Land, my turkey & cheese sandwich from the gas station, I would love to stop and have a beer at the brewery what a nice atmosphere – was wishing I could have a sandwich there! Wish so much to have been able to eat at Mayberry's! Looks like it was such a nice main street when the businesses were up and running.
- c. N/A

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