

# First Impressions

## Team Report Form



Community Visited: Glen Elder

Date Visited: 12/7/23  
1/30/24  
1/31/24 (2)

**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?**

- Glen Elder has a vibrant, robust website. Nice pics and great info. Lists businesses with websites, where applicable, and phone numbers. History was also nice to have. I liked that they had city minutes on-line. It's a great place to get all the info you need, such as electric and elected officials.
- Noticed there was no retail (grocery) found online and only one restaurant. Several places to stay - assume because they are right next to a huge lake.
- Website was really well put together and very easy to navigate.
- Great website and while there we were able to pull it up on our phones and it worked great!
- Glen Elder website - Very informative on attractions, businesses, organizations, and local government. The content and design is an excellent reflection of the community.

**2. The "Five-Minute" Impression: After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, the following reactions were noted.**

- Seems like a nice place to live. Very clean and well kept. Some houses have been redone to even 3-car garages- could be retirees. Maybe some store a boat and a car all in one garage.
- Nice streets & sidewalks. Wondering where they shop for food & where kids go to school (need to look back at website).
- The houses appear to be all in really good condition and well taken care of.
- Streets were marked well but not a lot of directional signage to get you downtown or to other businesses.
- Quiet, pretty clean, lots of beautiful limestone buildings.

**The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances (signs, streetscapes, buildings, etc.)**

- I didn't seem to see a sign for the city from K-24 entrance but there was a nice holiday sign on a pole from east side with the city's name on it.
- Nice limestone signs at each entrance which ties in nicely with the limestone around town.
- Welcome signs at all entrances.
- Coming into town from the west there was a pretty messy house or business property that gave the wrong impression of what the town would be like.
- Overall the access into town (West entrance from US 24) was marked well. There was an unsightly residence near that intersection that gave somewhat of a bad impression of what the rest of the community may contain. After a brief tour through town it was evident that nuisance properties were not the norm.
- The overall first impression was favorable, other than directions to the downtown/business district which were not clearly marked.

### 3. Downtown Business Area Describe the buildings, signs, infrastructure, etc.

- Glen Elder has a small square with a very nice playground in the center. I noticed on the website that they recently added public restrooms (which were open) and pop machines-nice for someone letting kids play. There was also a gazebo for picnics.
- All the buildings looked good (not run down)- there just aren't many businesses to shop at. A restaurant is on the square & possibly a tackle shop, which was closed (maybe during lunch or seasonal). There looked like there was a recently poured cement pad on the south side of square- maybe another restaurant?? City Hall is just off the square.
- The downtown was small but welcoming. Loved the square layout with the park in the middle.
- Not many abandoned buildings downtown. The one on the southeast corner of the main street area would be amazing if fixed up.
- There were a few buildings that were fixed up that had no signs on them so not sure what was inside.
- We wished there was information about the limestone building that looked like a former gas station. We were very interested in that and felt it should be a focus on the website. Even phone numbers out front if it was lodging would be helpful in case someone was traveling through town and wanted to stay.

#### **Explain what type of businesses you observed and give a description of the variety and quality of merchandise displayed.**

- Tackle shop was closed & not really anywhere else to shop. Restaurant on the square. Also, a senior center & post office. There was also a Legion on the square.
- Not a lot of businesses. It seemed like there was a lot of housing compared to the number of businesses.
- Some services, like insurance, but not a lot of shopping. A convenience store and one barbecue place.

- The feeling is it catered to lake visitors which is appropriate. Not many businesses in downtown would bring people in from out of town on a daily basis except for an insurance agency, a bank, a restaurant and a tackle shop.
- Several service businesses such as a bank and insurance agency were noted, but not visited. The bait shop and restaurant seemed to be the most frequented.
- I wasn't able to visit the sport shop while in town. The restaurant was selling t-shirt, which I intended to buy, but they did not have stock in-house.

**Describe the customer service received when you entered those retail businesses. (Were you greeted? Did you have to ask for assistance?)**

- Went to the restaurant and it was an early lunch so only a couple of others there. Ordered at counter and clerks were very helpful with the menu and brought out food.
- Customer service was very welcoming throughout and any questions posed were answered.
- When entering the restaurant the gal seemed less than thrilled to see us. She said she was helping her sister because she can't get any help – but she did warm up. We wanted to buy one of the shirts on display but they didn't have any and would have to go to Osborne to make one.
- Weren't many people around town so we didn't visit with anyone on the street. The few that were around waved at us.
- Thought advertising along the highway that there was a restaurant in town would be beneficial to them.
- During the visit I was only able to visit one open businesses. The staff was courteous and helpful.

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

- There were places to sit in the park in square as well as restrooms across the street. Plenty of trash receptacles. Didn't seem to have wi-fi, even at the restaurant.
- We appreciated the public bathrooms even though they smelled. Businesses that had "no public restroom" signs on the door explained where there was one – that was great!
- Loved the city park in the middle of downtown. It gave places for people to sit after they picked up food, to watch their children play, etc.
- Wi-Fi access was good in town.
- The community square was well maintained, even considering the winter climate. The restrooms were open and warm. That is a huge positive for the community.
- Plenty of seating and trash receptacles in this part of town. The square is a fantastic feature of the community.

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

- There was no problem parking in square area. Could access bank, post office, restaurant, tackle shop, Legion and senior center. Being winter, didn't see any potted plants but they have very nice holiday lighting around square.
- Landscaping looked like it would be full and pretty during the summer.
- Easy to walk downtown from where we parked and plenty of parking spaces.
- Really liked how the businesses surrounded the entire city park area.
- Would have liked to visit in spring or summer.
- Parking in the business area was ample and, as mentioned before, the public spaces were well maintained.

**4. Other Retail Shopping Areas**

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

- Didn't see any other retail shopping (multiple notes of this).
- Not many, if any, other shopping areas seen.
- No prominent retail shopping areas were evident outside of the central business district.

**5. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas**

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

- Only saw maybe one commercial area- someone is redoing the elementary school- not sure what is going in there- but lots & lots of trucks & pallets of something, I'm sure they are using inside. There is also a grain elevator close to square and when driving around saw a boat dealership on the hill.
- A lot of grain storage and elevators.
- Not really anything defined as an industrial area, some felt.
- None noted.

**6. Health Care Services**

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

- Did not see any hospitals or emergency medical services in town or on website. Multiple mentions of this.
- No visible healthcare services present.

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

- I'm guessing that the residents go to Beloit or Salina.
- None observed.

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

- Did not see any long-term care services or assisted living or nursing facilities. They do have what looks like a very nice apartment complex (ranch style)- might be for seniors but not sure.
- Nothing seen in this category.
- None visible.

## 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.)**

- There are houses that are older as well as houses that have been redone. This would appeal to all income wages. There were some properties for sale. Also there was another school (?) that has been refurbished into apartments (high rise). There are all sizes of houses, small to some that have been added on to as well as some houses that have been totally redone and bigger.
- I felt there was a lot of housing. AirBnBs, assuming those are for the lake-goers who don't live there. Some were well labeled and looked very charming.
- Only 2 houses were noted to be for sale in town. Not sure what the appeal would be to buy unless you planned on renting because of the lack of jobs in the area.
- Houses were affordable, but again would be a drive to a job. More units than you would think for a town that size.
- Variety of homes. West side definitely had the newer homes which had a view of the lake.
- There were a few dilapidated homes, but not many.
- Overall a nice variety of housing and most homes remained appropriate for their apparent neighborhood (no homes in disrepair in neighborhoods of newer homes). It appears by direct observation and web searches that housing availability is limited, much like is the case in many comparable communities.

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

- Not sure if there were any housing rentals except for the apartments, which didn't have any sign of vacancies.
- The two apartment buildings appeared to be in nice condition and seemed affordable. More units than you would think for a town that size.
- There was a rental complex that was an old high school that had been turned into rentals, but couldn't tell if it was still in operation. No welcoming benches or amenities that made it look like it was being used other than the sign up front.

- There were several buildings that seemed like maybe they were for lodging but they didn't have a sign – example was Barnwood Hideaway.
- None noted other than the nice public housing facilities.

## 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?**

- There is a preschool in Glen Elder with a nice playground. I referred back to the web which had a few school districts I assume children could attend who live in Glen Elder.
- No schools in town but it's a short drive to the nearest schools.
- We were very curious what the old grade school was used for. Lots of semi-trucks and trailers around needing unloaded, as well as dollies.
- We were eventually able to go online to find out that the old high school was now used for rentals and lodging which seems like a great way to utilize the building.
- No active school facilities were apparent within the community; however, the former school facility was in disrepair and an evident nuisance code issue for the community.

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

- Yes. The website has some information but not sure how to compare to others.
- Information was found online about the schools, but not necessarily the quality.
- Yes. Information on a number of educational facilities serving the community was readily available on the website.

## 9. Childcare

**What childcare services are available? Is it affordable?**

- There was some observed - I didn't stop to ask how many children can go to daycare (looked like for toddlers) or pricing.
- Did not see any advertisements related to childcare.
- Although the visit did not lend to visibility of daycare, daycare services were noted on the community website.

## 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?**

- There were several churches in town and all were nice looking and not run down. Not sure if any of the churches are involved in the senior center.
- Five churches were noted with a good range of denominations.
- The church buildings were well kept.
- The little church in the middle of the city park was cute, but not sure of the purpose.
- Other mentions of multiple churches seen with nice buildings and grounds.
- A number of churches were visible throughout town. They were well kept. There were no obvious faith-based community services.

## 11. Civic

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

- Only ones I noticed was the American Legion and senior center.
- The community center was also the senior center. It appeared to be a nice facility.
- According to the website, Glen Elder has a good mix of community organizations. I observed the Nutrition Center adjacent to the square and it seemed well utilized. The "Community Club" concept, as referenced on the website, is a great asset if it is active.

**Did you observe any evidence of civic organization activity?**

- The park does have nice metal signs with names on them, I assume these people donated for the park and play area.
- A lot of advertisements about the American Legion Pancake Breakfast.
- I saw no glaring evidence of civic organization activity during my visit.

## 12. Public Infrastructure

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

- The streets were all paved, which I appreciate. There were sidewalks. Parking around square could use painted slots. Enough parking around square.
- Looked like fairly new holiday lighting around square as well as east entrance- very modern looking- updated, nice.
- Restrooms around square were a great addition.
- All homes seemed to have mowed yards & well kept.
- Streets were not bad but very narrow. They were well marked but no directional signage was apparent to help you get around.
- Not a lot of lighting or streetscaping outside of the downtown area.
- Streets were confusing. Wanted to get to the baseball diamond (saw the lights) but were unable to get to it.
- Several dead ends were encountered unexpectedly, so some time was spent backing up.
- Streets again were noted to be narrow by multiple visitors.

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

- Ran out of time to visit city hall.
- Did observe city hall but it wasn't open during the visit.
- Was not able to visit city hall during my visit, but it was readily identifiable within the community.

**Police/fire protection:**

- Didn't see any police station or fire stations. Maybe rely on Beloit?
- A fire department was found by some, but was not easy to find as there was no sign. Multiple visitors mentioned they had to use Google Maps to locate it.
- Although the city doesn't directly provide law enforcement, it appeared that a deputy sheriff resided in town.
- The fire station was visible and according to council minutes, a newer truck was recently purchased.

**Library:**

- There was a library but almost missed- could use a bigger sign.
- The library wasn't open during some visits but looked to be a good size and well maintained.
- Did see a sign above a door indicating it was the library. For a small town the hours seemed appropriate.
- If printing or computers were available to patrons it might be nice to have a note on the door indicating that.
- The library facility was attractive from the exterior and well marked. It was not open during my visit to the community. The web presence for the library is well done.

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

- Did not see any city parks other than the one in the square. No walking trails, ballparks or sports complexes were seen.
- They do have a public pool, albeit fairly small but a benefit to have one. The pool did look nice.
- Good landscaping at the city park, nice trash cans and lighting.
- Benches were available everywhere.
- Loved the square park, pool, and sand volleyball court.



- The old grade school had a baseball field but not sure if it was still used or could be used by the public.
- If there was a fitness center in town it wasn't noticed during the visit.
- The parks were a positive for the community and I was particularly impressed with the swimming pool. Good to see in a community the size of Glen Elder.
- Having visited many communities with a "Mini" Liberty status, it would be neat to see Glen Elder work on a project to restore theirs (broken and missing pieces of the crown) as it is the focal point of the square. It would be neat to do a statue tour in the surrounding areas and use it as an attraction for people to come downtown.

### 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?**

- Didn't see any slogan for any asset on website or in town. Because they are right next to lake, I'm sure their population gets larger in Spring, Summer & Fall for fishing, boating. And maybe hunting.
- The lake – it was on all of the welcome signs.
- Could definitely tell Glen Elder was near the lake. A lot of boat sales and a tackle shop. Other than that, not sure it would have been apparent the lake was nearby.
- Definitely impressed the town has a swimming pool.
- Waconda Reservoir is immediately adjacent to the community, and it was evident that the lake and parks were a significant revenue source for the community. Graphics representing the city often contained references to lake activities.

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

- Did not see any.
- Just the Pancake Breakfast.
- None noted.

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

- The lake for sure. The world's largest ball of twine is several miles down the road. Lots of campgrounds as well as lodges and small hotels within driving distance.
- The lake probably keeps things going here. It's a nice size, popular, and the city has plenty of places to stay along with spots for RVs.
- The lake and beautiful limestone buildings.

- Waconda Reservoir, being adjacent to the community, and is a significant revenue source for the community.

**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.**

- Saw no visitor's center or chamber of commerce. City hall is just off the square.
- Some saw one as they were leaving, but not easy to spot and no indication it is there – lack of signs.
- Another mention of noticing an information center while leaving town, but visitors were unable to turn around in time once they noticed it. No signs were seen on the highway indicating it was there, perhaps there were but they weren't seen. Maybe there's an opportunity to market this more.
- Not for the city, however a visitor's center for the lake was just west of town, but was closed for the season.

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

- The lake would be my attraction in warmer weather.
- The barbecue joint was good but wouldn't travel to town just for that.
- Loved "Castle Lodge" – a very attractive building with charm.
- The lake, but probably wouldn't pull off the highway for anything else.

#### **14. Wrap-up**

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

- Clean and tidy. There seemed to be some new construction. They had some areas that could be built on.
- Great town if you are ok with a drive for groceries, hardware, etc.
- Loved the limestone buildings and accents.
- The lake is beautiful and there are good views from town.
- Houses were well kept (aside from just a few).
- A lot of lodging bringing in visitors to support the two or three businesses.
- More praise for the limestone buildings and views of the lake.
- The square downtown.  
The swimming pool.
- The limestone gas station turned into a house or maybe lodging – not sure what it's used for.
- Nice to have a restaurant.

- Restrooms available.
- The town seemed peaceful.
- Overall, I found a clean town with well maintained streets. The neighborhoods were well kept and public infrastructure maintained properly. I was impressed by what appeared to be a city-owned and operated car wash. Great concept!

**What are the biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?**

- No grocery, hardware but close to Beloit. No schools. Maybe is more of a bedroom community with older residents or summer inhabitants.
- Not enough businesses or progress towards expanding.
- No advertising along the highway for what's available – including the giant bobber, restaurant and restrooms.
- No apparent locations for businesses to come into town.
- No list of available properties to rent or buy.
- There were really no businesses that would bring people to town.
- As with any rural community, housing and education issues seem to be the largest obstacle facing the community.

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

- I have a positive feeling about Glen Elder and would return for fishing possibly.
- The Castle Lodge – such a cool and charming place!
- The gas station turned into housing/lodging.
- The giant bobber.
- The clever children's menu at the restaurant.
- The swimming pool even though it was small.
- Available restrooms.
- The welcome signs and potential of that dilapidated corner building.
- Great town – would love it here if I was looking for a quiet life.
- Glen Elder should be proud!
- Positives: The town square and former filling station immediately to the east. Negatives: The former school and its current condition

**How much money did you spend while you were in the city you visited?**

**\$30; \$15; \$35; \$20**

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



# K-STATE

## Research and Extension

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