



# FIRST IMPRESSIONS

A program for Community Improvement

## *Morrilton Community Report*

UNCOMMON  COMMUNITIES

*making our own future*

A WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE PROGRAM





## VISITATION TEAM PARTICIPANTS

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Dardanelle Post-Dispatch

Members from the Morrilton community also participated in the tour but not the discussion. A list of participants are below:

Kay Drilling Jones

Mayor Allen Lipsmeyer

Barry McKuin

Phyllis McKuin

Jessica Rohlman

Jerry Smith

Morgan Zimmerman

Brandon Zinser

## INTRODUCTION

The First Impressions program is designed to help a community learn about existing strengths and weaknesses as seen through the eyes of the first-time visitor.

The assessment is modeled after the Connecticut First Impressions program developed by Laura Brown with the University of Connecticut Extension and Susan Westa of the Connecticut Main Street Center. These programs are adaptations of the original University of Wisconsin-Extension First Impressions Program developed by Andrew Lewis and James Schneider in 1991 as a structured community assessment program that enables communities to learn about the first impression they convey to outsiders.

On Sept. 8, 2017, 24 community leaders from Conway, Perry, Pope, Van Buren and Yell County participated in a First Impression Tour of the city of Morrilton as part of the Year III component of the Uncommon Communities program. Uncommon Communities is a community and economic development program that marries the wisdom and methodology of celebrated community development expert Dr. Vaughn Grisham, professor emeritus of sociology and founding director of the McLean Institute for Community development at the University of Mississippi, with the award-winning Breakthrough Solutions partnership, under the direction of Dr. Mark Peterson at the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. This comprehensive program produces a group of community leaders who are equipped to assess, plan, visualize and mobilize citizenry to work together in the areas of economic development, education and workforce development, and quality of life and place—the critical elements of thriving communities—with an aim to help them become vibrant and sustainable in the 21st century global knowledge economy.

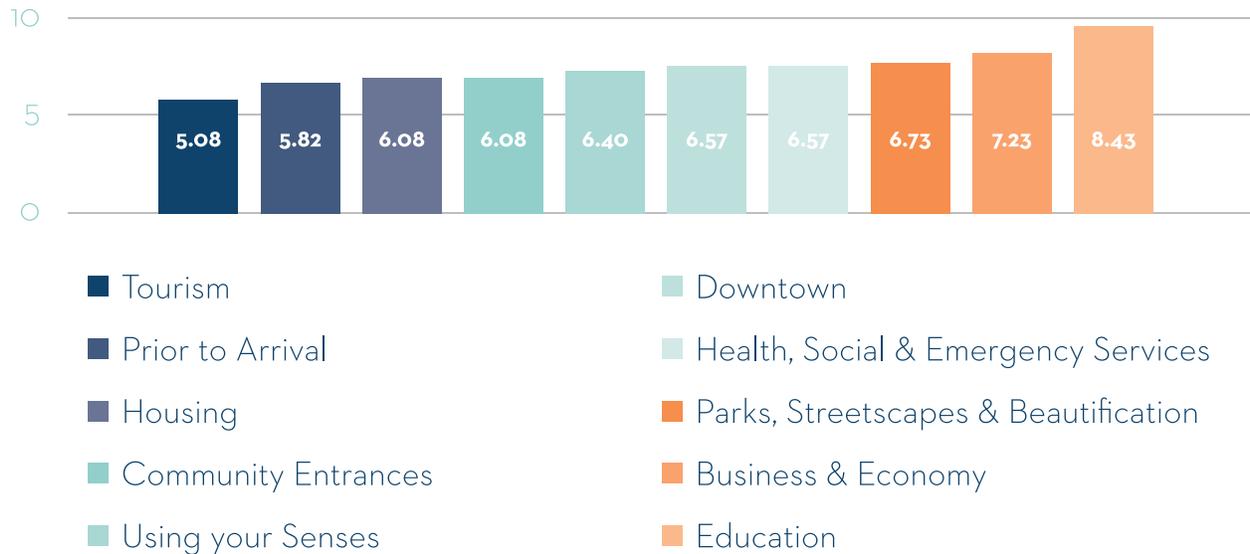
Following the tour, participants outside the city of Morrilton participated in a facilitated discussion led by the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute staff to gather their thoughts, feelings and perceptions of both positive assets and opportunities for improvement in Morrilton. Information contained in this report is a compilation of observations by these participants.

In addition to their observations, many questions in the guidebook asked for participants to use the following grade scale to grade various aspects of the community based on what they experienced:

- 9 - 10 = What I experienced far exceeded my expectations.
- 7 - 8 = What I experienced was better than my expectations.
- 5 - 6 = What I experienced met (but did not exceed) my expectations.
- 3 - 4 = What I experienced did not meet my expectations.
- 1 - 2 = What I experienced was far worse than my expectations.



## MORRILTON AREA FIRST IMPRESSIONS RATING



The graph below provides their average score for each section of the community observed. As noted, tourism received the lowest average score of 5.08 in which participants' experiences met their expectations; while education received the highest average rating of 8.43 in which participants' experiences was better than they expected.

Overall, there is no question that the first impression of Morrilton was positive with room for growth. Some common positive themes included the first-rate quality of educational facilities and cleanliness of the community. Participants were impressed with the amount of construction currently taking place within the city limits.

A few areas of opportunities mentioned during the facilitated discussion were that growth and opportunity seemed to be "interstate-centric" and the absence of young people involved in leadership roles. They felt that improved wayfinding signage highlighting community attractions and offering volunteer and civic opportunities to college students as a way to attract and retain college students in the area would be a significant improvement. Some also suggested Morrilton host a "Paint the Town" event downtown to encourage cleanup and revitalization of buildings and vacant lots currently in the downtown area.

This report is a compilation of observations and verbatim comments from each of the participants. It is not meant to offer specific recommendations for specific action, but rather the goal is for it to serve as the basis for community action.

### PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

The past perceptions of the Morrilton community were mixed. Most of the participants were familiar with the Morrilton area and cited both negative and positive perceptions.

**What is your impression of the community before your upcoming visit? What are you expecting to see?**

*"I actually graduated from MHS in 1973 and moved away. I shop in Morrilton and do business here. I have*

seen the commercials on TV, view from I-40, etc. Much improved since I moved back to Arkansas in 1991.”

“Home of Green Bay Packaging - usual small town, next to interstate. A bedroom community-community college town.”

“I thought Morrilton was impoverished because of the job market and age loss of Arrow, Levis and now pull back of gas drillers.”

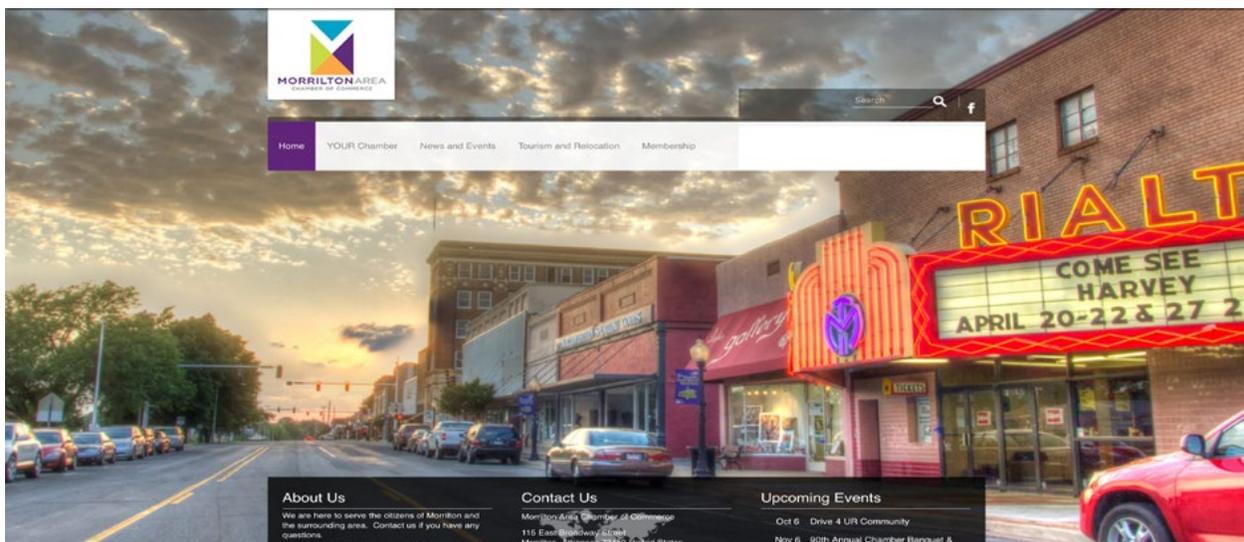
“Great arts, good industry, good schools, great park and high poverty levels, no hotels.”

**Identify the sense of the community you have from the online research ONLY. What is your gut reaction? Would you want to visit there with family or friends? Does the community seem to welcome you or others to visit or live there? Why or why not? Consider your income, age, interests, hobbies, family, health/disabilities, race and ethnicity in your response.**

It is easy to do a search on Morrilton and find information including lodging and a few places to eat. The first link that appears in a basic Google Search is the city’s website followed by the Morrilton Area Chamber of Commerce. These local websites provided a much better listing of things to do and direct links to area businesses. One participant liked that the Chamber of Commerce website listed a link for newcomers/new residents.

When searching on national websites, such as TripAdvisor and Yelp, the results were limited. A search for restaurants and lodging on TripAdvisor was limited with only eight things to do. Yelp only had four restaurants listed. While a few realtors’ websites were informative, most of them missed the mark on “selling the city” of Morrilton. As one participant noted, “Their website photos were nice with 120-plus pictures, but they were in no sort of order, wasted much time and told no definitive story.” We would recommend hosting a mini-workshop for small business owners, restaurateurs, vacation rental property owners and Realtors on how best to market themselves and the city of Morrilton online.

Participants recommended updating the city of Morrilton’s profile on the Arkansas Tourism website and encouraging tourists and residents to post more reviews on the City and Chamber Facebook pages. “Gut reaction is that it’s progressing as far as their online presence by using clean, attractive logos and brands but need to pull it together under the county. With it being a ‘college town’ they should be more progressive, you would think, but the Chamber looks like the go-to spot for the most up to date information. Could use more photos on all social media. Visuals attract. St. Vincent, St. Anthony Hospital Facebook pages are in need of major help, and the airport needs more likes!”



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>EXPECTATIONS</b></p> <p>“Thought I’d See More Distress”  “Pass Through to Little Rock”  “Zero Growth”  “Lost Opportunity”  “College Town - Busy with lots of Growth”  “Dying and Depressed”  “Wide spot on way to Oklahoma”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WHAT YOU SAW</b></p> <p>“Room for Growth”  “Vibrant”  “Lot of young people”  “School District - Impressive”  “Lot of Parks”  “Nice infrastructure”  “Need more mowing”</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>POSITIVES</b></p> <p>Great Streets  Parks  New Buildings  Clean Downtown  Pocket Park  School Facilities  Building Improvement  RVAC facility for challenged learners  Great Lodging  Close to Little Rock  Attractive to Development  A lot of eating options  Leadership momentum  Public-Private Investment</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <p>Expand Pocket Park  Community Garden  Paint the Town - Moose Street  Cleanup buildings (East of Rialto)  Cohesive Facades - Orchestrated need  Downtown Master Plan  Attract and Retain college students  Cleanup Empty Lots - Outdoor Events  Capitalize on Mo-Town Brand  Downtown Housing - Loft Apartments  Train Cars - Food Vendors near Depot  Activate Train Space  Advertise things to do  Murals</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CHALLENGES</b></p> <p>Interstate Centric  What about the river?  How to promote/connect mountain  Real Estate/Legacy Landowners - How to engage?  Incentivize Cleanup and Revitalization  Shopping Center - Doesn’t have nostalgia, doesn’t pop  Millennials need to be included in planning process</p>	



**COMMUNITY ENTRANCES**

**The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances:**

For the two major entrances, comments were mixed with an average rating of 6.08 regarding the appearance of the community entrances. Participants’ experiences met but did not exceed their expectations. Positive comments related to the well-maintained condition of the roads and the availability of food chains and retail available near the Interstate. Most of the negative comments were in regards to the Highway 64 entrance appearing vacant with nothing welcoming or enticing.

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<p><b>Approached from Highway 9 and Highway 95</b></p>	<p><b>Approached from Highway 64</b></p>
<p><i>“Impressed with the Hwy 9 entrance and Hwy 95 was ok but the College that connects both along with the Intermediate and High Schools are really nice. Much improved over years past. Strong positive change. Game changer”</i></p> <p><i>“Lots of dining options and retail gives impression of successful community. Kept clean. Empty buildings are opportunities. Should not be considered negative.”</i></p> <p><i>“Roads are well maintained.”</i></p> <p><i>“Lots of new buildings, nice wall with city name.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Westside: The industrial side is fine and room for growth but some ground maintenance would make the first impression better.”</i></p> <p><i>“Nothing especially eye catching or unique that would make me want to get off interstate to come here.”</i></p> <p><i>“West 64 entrance is seemingly ‘sketchy’ part of town but leads into golf course and etc.”</i></p> <p><i>“Highway 64 entrance is and always has been fairly sad as it seems like the old taverns and shops would be tough to turn around. I’m sure that is a very large challenge.”</i></p>



## DOWNTOWN

### Observations about the general appearance of the downtown area:

The majority of our time was spent in downtown Morrilton with residents being able to get off the bus and walk around to nearby shops and businesses on Moose Street. The average rating of the downtown was a 6.57 in which participants' experiences met their expectations. The majority of participants' comments were positive regarding the cleanliness and appearance of current improvements. Overall, participants were encouraged by building improvements taking place and overwhelmingly agreed that the downtown has the potential to play a greater role in improving the overall perception of the community.

Recommendations to improve the downtown area include expanding the Pocket Park on Broadway Street, potentially adding a community garden and wayfinding signage. One participant suggested for the community to hold a Paint the Town cleanup event downtown on Moose Street. Another participant suggested for the community to activate the depot/museum area by adding additional rail cars with restaurants and other food truck type businesses and hosting live bands in the evening to attract visitors and young families.

**Comment on the overall appearance of the buildings, displays, signage, and streetscape. Is the downtown walkable and accessible? Comment on the quality, availability, or necessity for parking in the downtown. Does the downtown play a role in tourism? Is there potential for it to play a greater role.**

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<p><i>"Far better than a few years ago. Businesses are open, buildings in good repair, no "dying community" look."</i></p> <p><i>"Obvious effort to improve buildings."</i></p>	<p><i>"Buildings have rundown appearance"</i></p> <p><i>"Obviously trying in "historical district" to many 'rickety' businesses - no signs."</i></p>



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<p><i>"Loved the train station in town. Do possibly some murals to add art, even murals on sidewalks or roadways. You have a younger crowd that would thrive in some downtown entertainment. Like the winery but needs possibly better signage and..."</i></p> <p><i>"The businesses that are there are kept neat and clean. Pleasant signage. Love the old street lamps. There is so much room and opportunities available. Promote the "Mom n Pops" idea of locally owned retail and restaurants. Great place for foot traffic. Nice sidewalks and maybe play up the railroad aspect."</i></p> <p><i>The downtown area has such personality and with some TLC, could become a destination downtown area."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Love the Pocket Park."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Nostalgic, good signage"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"So much potential!"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Charming buildings and businesses."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"I love downtown. I think the alleys are great."</i></p>	<p><i>"Downtown area needs to clean up that natural brick and pain the trim. Clean up empty spaces until they are utilized. Could clean up sides of railroad tracks"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Some vacant buildings could be painted up without a lot of effort."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Lacking purpose and direction outside of downtown."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Many empty storefronts and buildings"</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Buildings should match, either paint them or strip them."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Needs some TLC."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Sand blaster and paint will do a lot of good."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Could use work in some areas."</i></p>



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<p><i>"Food Truck Park?"</i></p> <p><i>"Community garden?"</i></p> <p><i>"Love the additions. Much improved."</i></p> <p><i>"Area looked nice, even the vacant lots were fairly clean."</i></p> <p><i>"Ample parking, new businesses lot of activity great signage."</i></p> <p><i>"The downstairs - was clean - like prepped for readiness for construction/business."</i></p> <p><i>"Landscaping is beautiful."</i></p> <p><i>"Love Rialto."</i></p> <p><i>"Good Retail"</i></p> <p><i>"Downtown = great"</i></p> <p><i>"Could benefit from paint the town."</i></p> <p><i>"Could definitely be a tourist draw."</i></p> <p><i>"Such fun unique buildings, and a lot of character. A lot of potential."</i></p>	<p><i>"Still lots of empty storefronts."</i></p> <p><i>"Many vacant buildings, or buildings areas needing updates."</i></p> <p><i>"Could have better signage."</i></p> <p><i>"Empty buildings"</i></p> <p><i>"Empty spaces"</i></p> <p><i>"Downtown needs more work"</i></p>

## TOURISM

Due to the nature of the assessment tour, participants did not have an opportunity to tour the city of Morrilton’s tourism attractions on Petit Jean Mountain and at Lake Overcup. However, many of the participants were aware of these tourism attractions and discussed opportunities for the city to capitalize on building a relationship and connection between Petit Jean Mountain events and those that take place within the city limits. Overall, participants rated tourism as a 5.08. While it was the lowest score, participants’ expectations were met but not exceeded.

The comments within this section discuss tourism attractions within range of the business district.

**Does the community appear to have a strong tourism sector? Why or why not? What have you seen that could be developed into a tourist attraction (natural or man-made)? Comment on the quality and appearance of existing tourist attractions.**

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<i>“Winery and Theater were nice”</i>	<i>“Seems to be “on the way to somewhere,” no “stop” appeal.”</i>
<i>“Recognition of natural tourist attraction”</i>	<i>“Could use better directional signage to attractions: Why would I stay?”</i>
<i>“Good parks”</i>	<i>“West 64 entrance is seemingly ‘sketchy’ part of town but leads into golf course and etc.”</i>
<i>“Golf course is nice”</i>	<i>“Really didn’t see much to do on tourism. Retail and food good but what’s there to do? Offer more entertainment with pocket parks in empty spaces and music.”</i>
<i>“Nice restaurants”</i>	<i>“Nothing draws you into the golf course”</i>
<i>“Need some quirky events (Goat Fest).”</i>	<i>“Limited lodging”</i>
<i>“Need something unique to draw from other cities, maybe in old dealerships.”</i>	<i>“Very little signage for state park, winery, etc.”</i>
<i>“Perfect timing w/the fair - Why else do people make a day trip to Morrilton - not just a night to eat at Yesterday’s.”</i>	<i>“Doesn’t seem to be a lot of opportunity for tourism from the outside.”</i>
	<i>“No lodging in the heart of the town.”</i>
	<i>“Doesn’t seem to be much to do in city limits.”</i>
	<i>“No lodging in the heart of the town, therefore people who come stay overnight may not even know what the community offers.”</i>
	<i>“Nothing indicated things to do in town.”</i>

## HOUSING

Comments regarding Morrilton’s existing housing stock were positive with a diverse mix of historic and new construction homes that seemed affordable. The average rating for housing was 6.08 which tied with community entrances rating. Participants recommended the city enforce codes to encourage property owners to maintain or condemn inhabitable resident lots and to maintain yards.

**Describe the residential housing mix in the community (apartment, townhouses, single-family, multi-family, etc.).**

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<p><i>“Lots of new and improved and apartment type housing.”</i></p> <p><i>“The older side of town is still there but vast improvement.”</i></p> <p><i>“Well-kept neighborhoods.”</i></p> <p><i>“Nice variety of affordable housing.”</i></p> <p><i>“Some very nice subdivisions.”</i></p> <p><i>“Bank building would be great for loft apartments.”</i></p> <p><i>“Seems to have good mix.”</i></p> <p><i>“There were good, housing opportunities and pretty neighborhood.”</i></p> <p><i>“What we saw looked good.”</i></p> <p><i>“New and old in good condition.”</i></p> <p><i>“Like most towns old/new homes - nice to see new constructions, but still have homes to be starter ups and fixer ups.”</i></p> <p><i>“New Homes = New Growth.”</i></p> <p><i>“Saw growth with new construction, this is promising. Keep up the new construction this is a positive step to growth.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Yard maintenance could be improved.”</i></p> <p><i>“Old empty vacant houses - condemn or remove.”</i></p> <p><i>“Charming small homes but they need a lot of work.”</i></p> <p><i>“Needs work”</i></p> <p><i>“Most homes were older and needing updates.”</i></p> <p><i>“I didn’t see much apartment or townhouse living.”</i></p> <p><i>“Old houses still need clean up.”</i></p> <p><i>“Old part of town with beat up housing, empty lots - some mixed with commercial activities need looked at and resolved.”</i></p> <p><i>“Some houses just need cleaning up around - It should say “future home” rather than “abandoned.”</i></p>



## BUSINESS AND ECONOMY

The city of Morrilton has a well-maintained industrial park with ample space located near I-40 with access to river and rail. Overall, business and economy ranked the second-highest at 7.23 next to education where participants' experiences was better than their expectations. The comments were mostly all positive. Some participants suggested for the city to also focus on small businesses and offer incentives for entrepreneurs in addition to recommending the city of Morrilton explore options to host the Arkansas Economic Development Commission's (AEDC) breakfast in Little Rock.

**Is there a well-maintained industrial park? Why or why not? Would this community be an attractive location for small businesses/entrepreneurs? Why or why not?**

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<p><i>"Lots of potential new business and manufacturing sites available with I-40, rail and river."</i></p> <p><i>"Shows industrial promise."</i></p> <p><i>"There's room for industrial but the vacant spaces are good opportunities for small businesses of all kinds. Possibly offer business incentives to entrepreneurs to fill one of those empty buildings."</i></p> <p><i>"Lots of new businesses."</i></p>	<p><i>"More available services in Conway."</i></p> <p><i>"Nice lots for new industry, but actual industry on East side needs updates."</i></p> <p><i>"Saw all the space for industry, yet not a lot of industry."</i></p> <p><i>"Mostly empty."</i></p>



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<p><i>“Not sure what is being done to promote new businesses to the area but your education system should be a venue you could use to promote students to grow up and stay, start a business, give them a reason not to leave.”</i></p> <p><i>“Great success in repurposing buildings.”</i></p> <p><i>“Very nice start inviting to potential businesses.”</i></p> <p><i>“Charming shops, nice businesses near main thoroughfares.”</i></p> <p><i>“Business section on east side appears to be doing well and growing.”</i></p> <p><i>“Teletech seems to be a great addition.”</i></p> <p><i>“The industrial park seemed well maintained or there was quite a bit for the size of the community.”</i></p> <p><i>“Many small businesses downtown.”</i></p> <p><i>“Lots of opportunity.”</i></p> <p><i>“Appeared to be an active economy.”</i></p> <p><i>“Saw lots of small businesses.”</i></p> <p><i>“Even with the empty buildings - I see “action” happenings - good to see construction.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Make sure your buildings and sites are in AEDC database and kept updated.”</i></p> <p><i>“Besides industry positions, there didn’t seem to be many high paying job opportunities.”</i></p> <p><i>“Some of downtown storefronts could use sprucing up.”</i></p> <p><i>“Older “warehouse” looking businesses look out of place because everything else looks very good.”</i></p>



**EDUCATION**

Education rated the highest with an average grade of 8.43. The school facilities from K-12 including the community college were well-maintained and looked up to date giving the impression that Morrilton is well-equipped to provide a good education. The schools had great curb appeal and all the schools were having safe rooms constructed which had a net positive effect on participants.

**Comment on the availability and quality of schools (pre-school/kindergarten/Headstart, primary/elementary/middle schools, high schools, colleges/universities).**

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<p><i>“Great improvement as per physical structures and UACCM as well from “Vo Tech” days.”</i></p> <p><i>“Love seeing growth at the college. Keep this up!”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Outstanding!”</i></p> <p><i>“Safe rooms at every campus, very nice upgrades.”</i></p> <p><i>“Buildings are great as are sports facilities.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Possibly clean up empty spaces next to college campus. Your campus is great!”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“No Directions”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Did not notice pre-k.”</i></p>



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<p><i>"MUCH IMPROVED!!"</i></p> <p><i>"Schools look great."</i></p> <p><i>"Feels like the college "saved" the town and gave a big spark and the people have taken that and built momentum. Smart! Spurred upgrading of other schools (I assume)."</i></p> <p><i>"Schools are diverse and well updated."</i></p> <p><i>"Nice facilities, lots of opportunity."</i></p> <p><i>"Schools looked great - very well kept - shows pride."</i></p> <p><i>"PVAC, Adult Education"</i></p> <p><i>"Morrilton has choices for schools - sacred heart and public schools - and lots construction going on."</i></p>	



## HEALTH, SOCIAL AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

The availability of healthcare facilities seemed to be adequate for a community the size of Morrilton. The average rating for these services received an 6.57. Medical services were also scattered throughout the community and did not give the impression of a robust availability of medical services. Participants commented on the lack of curb appeal the hospital had and recommended the hospital conduct upgrades on their facility and also on their website.

**Comment on the availability of healthcare facilities (hospitals, physicians, dentists, optometrists, or other medical offices and clinics, long-term care or assisted living, and other health services such as chiropractic, mental health, yoga, massage); community gardens, the availability of civic organizations and fitness centers; emergency shelters and services.**

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<p style="text-align: center;">“We use Morrilton medical facilities and are very satisfied.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Nice hospital.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Great hospital, St. Vincent and UAMS.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Programs for adults w/disabilities.”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">“But hard to erase what every community suffers, the old “Our hospital is no good” syndrome. Totally false in Morrilton. May not be the best but are <u>GOOD</u>.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“It’s always a plus to have a hospital, but...”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“The hospital seems a little run down. Their website was not encouraging but that’s a pretty easy fix.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Didn’t see a lot of clinics”</p>



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<p><i>"Nice fire stations."</i></p> <p><i>"Nice hospital frontage."</i></p> <p><i>"CHI St. Vincent provides stability and a variety of visiting specialists."</i></p> <p><i>"May be good staff?"</i></p> <p><i>"Sufficient for Morrilton."</i></p> <p><i>"Nice facility"</i></p> <p><i>"Lots of emergency services and fire stations"</i></p> <p><i>"Saw everything listed above"</i></p> <p><i>"Clean central location part of "CHI"</i></p> <p><i>"Some communities do not have hospitals - Morrilton's is close to interstate - wonder where the next hospitals are - Conway, Russellville - then how far to north and south?"</i></p>	<p><i>"Looks incredibly sketchy."</i></p> <p><i>"I didn't notice much honestly."</i></p> <p><i>"Older hospital."</i></p> <p><i>"How will ambulance get across railroad when train on track?"</i></p>

## PARKS, STREETSCAPES AND BEAUTIFICATION

The city’s streetscapes downtown and near the college were well-maintained. The city park received a lot of rave reviews for the amount of amenities offered to families and for how well- maintained and managed it appeared. Several participants suggested the city provide signage to provide directions to the park and the amenities offered for when you get to the park including the baseball field, pool, skate park, etc. Another recommendation including the city adding bike trails for tourist and residents alike. Participants’ average rating for this section was a 6.73.

**Do areas of the community appear to be developing or declining? Comment on how effectively the community appears to be managing this. Does the community have historic buildings or places? Are they well maintained? What recreational activities or facilities seemed to be missing? Does the community appear welcoming to a diverse range of residents? Why or why not?**

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<p><i>“The parks we saw looked clean, well maintained and accessible.”</i></p> <p><i>“Population over 10,000 fewer people but better looking community now when I left.”</i></p> <p><i>“Nice looking parks”</i></p> <p><i>“Cute parks!”</i></p> <p><i>“Great spaces that could be used as patios and green spaces”</i></p> <p><i>“Nice in downtown. Expand as appropriate”</i></p> <p><i>“Quite a few parks, most seem well maintained”</i></p> <p><i>“Downtown streets are beautiful”</i></p> <p><i>“Nice parks”</i></p> <p><i>“Hwy 64 through downtown looks great”</i></p> <p><i>“Morrilton is an attractive community”</i></p> <p><i>“Everywhere we went was clean -every once in a while there was a yard - but on the majority nice clean.”</i></p> <p><i>“Skate Park, City Park, downtown - really nice - new construction, in the same neighborhood as older homes.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Buildings need painted”</i></p> <p><i>“Better signage to park areas could be utilized and possibly a kiosk area, or map of where things are downtown, parks, etc.”</i></p> <p><i>“Some streets narrow - on south side”</i></p> <p><i>“Update buildings in historic area”</i></p> <p><i>“Tracks seem to divide downtown”</i></p> <p><i>“Did not seem super welcoming”</i></p> <p><i>“Needs more beautification”</i></p>



## USING YOUR SENSES

Participants toured the community during peak traffic hours between 12:30 pm and 1:30 pm. Participants average rating for senses was 6.4. Participants did not report any offensive smells. Many participants commented on the amount of traffic but it did not have a negative impression on them.

**What did the community taste like? Was there any specialty food item, bakery, restaurant, or other food store that you will remember? What did the community smell like? Were there any offensive smells? What about pleasant odors (flowers, food, etc.)? What sounds did you hear? Please comment on the level of noise in the community (traffic, industrial noises, birds singing, water fountains, music on the streets, trains, clock chimes). How would you describe the overall environmental health of the community (air quality, litter, noise pollution, etc.)?**

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<p><i>"Morrilton - visually was pretty - the plants blooming if we had been on sidewalks outside. You know it would have been delicious."</i></p> <p><i>"Lots of eating options"</i></p> <p><i>"Hibachi! No offensive smells. No sounds that really stuck with me. Train last night was loud downtown."</i></p> <p><i>"Hibachi truck - will remember. Love the café."</i></p> <p><i>"No offensive smells to me. Didn't notice any negative noise. Lots of loud trucks."</i></p> <p><i>"Downtown Hibachi, nothing really offensive."</i></p> <p><i>"The community looks very active and vibrant."</i></p>	<p><i>"Good variety of corporate and home town restaurants, but better selections in Conway and Russellville."</i></p> <p><i>"No smells, lots of traffic. To me traffic might show a successful community but this also drowns out the sounds of nature. It's a busy college town not an outdoor adventure so that's fine if that's what you are looking for. It might be nice to see more foliage downtown, planters, etc."</i></p> <p><i>"Smell of hibachi"</i></p>



**Did you experience anything that had strongly negative or positive impact on the way the community felt to you (children playing, hateful or angry responses, crowded or deserted streets and safety issues, smiling faces)? Do you think your impression would be different if your visit occurred during a different time of day or at a different time of year?**

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<p><i>"There is still crime and drug issues here but clearly not the way it was a few years ago."</i></p> <p><i>"Daytime saw mostly car traffic, kids in school. I imagine the weekends are very different since there are lots of stores and restaurants to visit. I'm sure your parks are busy."</i></p> <p><i>"Deserted auto dealerships. Large gaps in an otherwise bustling, nice area. Would be nice if the owners would allow some type of use until they sold. Mobile car sales, car washes, event center, something?"</i></p> <p><i>"Only if it had been winter."</i></p>	<p><i>"Empty lots"</i></p> <p><i>"Nothing that influenced either way"</i></p> <p><i>"I didn't notice anything overwhelmingly obvious either way."</i></p> <p><i>"Lots of areas abandoned."</i></p> <p><i>"Where the bus stopped there was a vacant lot in downtown that had a pit that was not barricaded."</i></p>



## REFLECTIONS

**What local restaurant, specialty shop, or attraction would bring you back to this community in the future?**

- Ortega's
- Coffee/pastry shop
- Antique and resale shops
- Patios
- More outdoor venues
- Rialto
- Movie House Winery

### **Additional Comments:**

*"Would enjoy a visit to the winery. Didn't know you had one. Do some outdoor entertainment in the spring, summer and fall and this would be a fun place to spend a weekend."*

*"Lots of fast food but need a "knock your socks off" Unusual eatery - something that would draw more than locals/and would get them off the interstate."*

*"Boutiques downtown looked inviting - The cinnamon rolls from downtown were worth a drive back."*

**Would you consider locating a retail, professional, or nonprofit business here? Why or why not?**

*"Yes. You have built in customers with the college crowd. The downtown is a gem ready to shine. Good luck!"*



*"I do business here."*

*"Sure, obvious customer base with interstate and state highway traffic."*

*"Yes. Retail would depend on population - propensity for growth and continued attraction of new populations who have disposable income to sustain and man my business. Nonprofits would need affordable housing for activity and knowledgeable and trainable staff."*

*"Not enough draw unless it was a business for children."*

*"Possibly downtown"*

*"Yes, if need for printing services"*

*"Yes, because it looks like a striving town businesses parking lots full of cars - how to measure a business."*

**Would you consider living here? Why or why not?**

*"No, I live in the country - not rural enough! Lol."*

*"No, I'm more an outdoor, nature person. Too many people but love to visit. Thinking creatively, you could address tourism and be a college town."*

*"No, I love FFB. Otherwise, yes."*

*"Yes, only if I were younger and had children to educate."*

*"If I relocated for work."*

*"Maybe outside of town, but that's what I prefer anyway."*

*"I have moved away, but would come back. Love where the town is headed."*

*"Yes, I feel like this community has a lot of potential and with the right people (which it seems like they have) this place will continue moving in a positive direction."*

*"Maybe. You guys are headed in a good direction."*

*"Yes, I like small community. Looks like a nice place to live."*

*"Yes, positive attitude and future growth."*

*"Yes, because you can see the growth - especially in the schools."*

## **WRAP UP**

### **What is the most outstanding feature of this community?**

- Progress and construction going on
- The college
- UACCM
- The community college and high school
- People
- UACCM
- Rialto
- Cleanliness
- There want to!

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

- I will still be here
- I'll remember the college and the potential that Main Street has
- Positive attitude of those I have met
- Positive downtown historical district/partial
- Lots of development possibilities
- Negative - amount of resale/antiques/second-hand
- Lack of permanent sustainable businesses downtown
- Potential Downtown
- Looks great and active
- Downtown
- Business opportunities with college kids
- The schools, upgrades and safe rooms/public school district - local investment paid by tax dollars
- Can see progress
- College - No idea what springboard they offered

### **What have you learned that has changed your impression of your own community?**

- Empty buildings are potentials for growth not something negative.
- We are well laid out and zoned
- Progressive can do attitude of elected officials and chamber.
- My community does not look inviting
- New construction, downtown activities



**Has this experience given you any new ideas about what is needed in your own community?**

- Safe rooms for schools
- Yes - not much applicable past reinforces ideas things goals we need to accomplish in our town.
- Reinforced idea that my community needs to look better.

**Describe one idea that you will borrow for use in your own community and describe how you will implement it.**

- Will look into safe rooms for our schools and encourage our Mayor to start a focus group to revitalize our Main Street specifically. I'm working at a county level but we need city focus as well. Would also like to see continuing education in our community as well.
- Public-Private investment partnerships
- Leadership Class
- Remember to keep thinking big - schools pre-k
- Expand on our continued education
- Can we use UACCM? Adult education and nursing
- Ideas for workforce training
- Workforce Development Center inspiring





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