

# FIRST IMPRESSIONS

## Community Assessment Report – 2019

Village of Clinton



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## Introduction

### Purpose

A First Impressions program is a tool that offers an objective multi-faceted look at how your community is perceived. The program is accomplished by an unannounced visit to the community for a professional look as a first-time visitor. No prior research is facilitated, and no community representatives are contacted except to set up the project. Clinton is “secretly shopped”.

The unannounced visit to Clinton is based on the scenario of being first time visitors from the point of view of an investor, potential business or entrepreneur.

This report is provided as information to the Village of Clinton to use for future planning activities. The ideas presented are not termed “recommendations” as there were no community consultations regarding possible restraints, future plans or reasons why the ideas may not be appropriate or feasible.

There may be instances where issues are identified within this report that you are already aware of and already working on. In that case, the report, validates those efforts. There may be other instances where the report points out things that you are not aware of and may disagree with. It is important to note this report represents a specific point in time when the community was visited. It is from the eyes of a first-time visitor who may or may not know various facts. It is not meant to be a criticism but instead to illustrate what visitors may see when they first visit the community.

### Conditions of Visit

The unannounced visit took place on Friday, June 14, 2019 between the hours of 11:00 am – 4:00 pm. The weather was sunny with temperatures in the high 20s. Overall, the conditions were favourable for visiting and exploring the main areas within the community, including parks, businesses, and residential areas.

### Process

Our team contracted with the Village of Clinton to undertake a First Impressions Audit as a component of the overall Economic Development Action Plan. We confirmed via email our team would visit the community within the next four weeks on an undisclosed date and without further contact with any community representative.

Our team took one vehicle to Clinton and immediately began a 5 – 10-minute tour of the area (Quick Pass). We did this from each entrance point along Highway 97. After our initial orientation, we began to visit specific areas of interest to gather additional information. During this part of the assessment we looked for the following:

- enticements from the highways (signs, billboards, something that would get a visitor to stop)
- beautification and overall curb appeal
- wayfinding (ease of getting around)
- visitor amenities (public washrooms, visitor information, parking)
- activities, overall appeal, retail mix (lodging, dining, shopping)
- critical mass
- customer service
- area attractions
- pedestrian friendliness

- gathering spaces
- the availability of marketing materials and their effectiveness

After completing the quick pass, our team returned to locations that caught our attention with a focus on looking more closely at the community as an investment opportunity or business potential.

## First Impressions Results

### Quick Pass Impression

After taking a quick drive through the community without stopping, the following were noted:

- Driving south into Clinton on Highway 97 (from 70 Mile House) gives a very good impression of the community – beautiful, green, lush, clean, well-maintained farmlands.
- Driving north into Clinton along Highway 97 (from Cache Creek) gives a different impression of the community – one of the first images seen is the auto salvage and the pull out on the left-hand side with a faded sign. Though the grass is well-maintained, the turn into the community is not as attractive as it could be.
- Both directions had signs “advertising” various community events including the May ball and the rodeo. Demonstrates there is ongoing community activity.
- Driving along the main street of town there were people strolling through the various businesses and it looked like it was a small, busy downtown where residents and tourists engage.
- Lots of on street parking available.

**Overall: Our first impression to the community was positive. The quick pass impression left us wanting to explore the community further.**

### Community Entrances

We approached Clinton from the two major entrances – from 70 Mile House and Cache Creek. Signage placed at the entrances to any community is important – 72% of all complaints from visitors to a new community focus on poor wayfinding and directional signage. The easier it is to find attractions and amenities, the longer visitors will stay and spend

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

- The welcome signs are very attractive and well maintained.
- The “Whoa! Don’t go” is amusing and gives a friendly impression of the community.
- No signage was evident regarding things that a visitor can do in the community or where a visitor can go to see things in the area (ie: Chasm, Kelly Lake, Cougar Point, trails, etc).
- The entrance coming into Clinton from 70 Mile House is very attractive while the entrance from Cache Creek is not as enticing until you get around the bend and begin to drive along the main street.
- There is a map of the region located at the south end, but no map located at the north end.





**Overall: The approaches into Clinton were attractive and generally well-maintained. The Village's welcome signs are very well done, consistent and attractive. There are signs that need updating and some maintenance (example, the No Overnight RV Parking), but most areas are kept clean and well-maintained. It left us with an impression as an investor or future resident that the community cares about its appearance.**

## Local Economy

### Initial impressions of the health of the local economy:

The downtown business core for Clinton is accessed immediately upon entering the community from either direction. Businesses are located on both sides of the Cariboo Highway as you drive through town. During the time of our visit, the businesses were busy with many locals and visitors alike strolling through town. This presented a very good impression of the community and demonstrated business activity.

Our first visit in the community was to the Visitor's Centre. We were warmly welcomed by Bernice, who took time to talk to us about the history of Clinton and answer all our questions. She is an excellent ambassador for the community. She was able to answer our general questions regarding the local economy and directed us to the Village office for more detail. Bernice was positive about the community and talked about the new businesses in town as well as provided us with recommendations for places to eat and visit. When she arrived in the community, she also talked about how easy it was to adapt and how welcoming long-time residents were towards her. The information she provided gave a very good impression about doing business or living in Clinton. This type of interaction is very encouraging to visitors to want to stay and explore the opportunities Clinton has to offer.

### Downtown Core Area

#### Ease of locating the downtown:

- The downtown core for Clinton is accessed immediately upon entering the community from either direction.
- Businesses are located on both sides of the Cariboo Highway as you drive through town.

#### Overall appearance of the downtown area:

- It is obvious as soon as you drive through the community the majority of businesses are vintage or second-hand shops – this is a growing retail sector within Canada and the US.
- There are some nice, well-maintained heritage buildings, however, some of the signs are difficult to read due to the white font on a light-coloured background.
- A few exceptional storefronts and window displays.



**Variety of shopping in the downtown area:**

- Theme of vintage or second-hand shopping in the downtown area.
- Limited variety of shopping but not unexpected given the size of the community.

**Customer service at businesses visited:**

- The level of customer service was very good – every business we visited was welcoming and friendly. Notably, as mentioned above, our visit to the Visitor's Centre set the tone for the community.
- The Clinton Lodge provided excellent service for lunch and was busy inside and out. The offering of free Wi-Fi, along with a password clearly displayed is an asset to the community. This was also available in the Junction Coffee House.
- It should also be noted that on Trip Advisor the Junction Coffee House gets a 4.5 out of 5 and appears to respond to the majority of posts. This leaves a great external impression of not only the business but also the community.

**Signage in the downtown area:**

- Not a lot of signage downtown to direct us to things to do in the community.
- The heritage signs were difficult to read unless you were up close due to the white used on a light background.

**Mix of facilities and services in the downtown:**

- Limited mix of services available.

**Quality and availability of parking:**

- Abundant on-street parallel parking available.

**Role and potential of the downtown in tourism:**

- The vintage and antique shopping is a good draw for tourists. Would be good to see a unified signage program for all the businesses downtown, along with use of the sidewalks for displays and greenery – extending their window displays to exterior spaces. Some businesses, including As the Crow Flies, is already doing this. By having all businesses adopt this “beautification” would enhance the downtown and the visitor experience.

**Residential housing mix in downtown:**

- There was evident signs of older homes and a few newer ones. There are some older homes that have been well maintained and add character to the community.
- Multi-family housing was visible in some areas however seem to need repair.

**Desirability of the downtown as a place to live:**

- Downtown would be a desirable place to be. Clinton is a walkable community so anywhere in the main core part of the community would be desirable.

**Retail goods requiring travel to other communities:**

- Limited goods are available locally and most retail items will need to be shopped for out of town including clothing, sporting goods, furniture and a variety of professional services, etc.

**Overall condition of the retail sector:**

- For a small town the retail sector seemed in decent condition. On the day of our visit businesses appeared to have a steady flow of customers.
- We saw that some businesses were doing renovations or improvements to their appearance. A consistent theme would be something that would enhance the community.
- Home delivery of food is available by the grocery store at the Shell Gas Station (which is very clean and well stocked).

### Local Industries and Real Estate

**Major industrial sectors in Clinton:**

- Ranching/agriculture seems to be a major industry in the area.
- It was evident that forestry did play a major role in the community/area. The mill is not in town and is not visible from the highway.
- No other major industry was visible.

**Major employers in Clinton:**

- West Fraser Chasm Mill (Note: On June 17, this facility announced its plans to close permanently by the fall of 2019).

**Industrial park or serviced land where manufactures could locate or expand:**

- The industrial land is located at the south end of the community. After a quick drive through, there did not appear to be any available land nor any signage indicating this is an industrial park or any posted contact information.

**Apparent dependence on one type of industry:**

- Given the area it was our impression that the forest industry was a major contributor to the local economy. This was enhanced when we witnessed forestry vehicles and logging trucks on the highway through town.

**Are industrial facilities well maintained:**

- The industrial park at the entrance to the community was not as attractive as it could be. A revitalized entrance could be considered with a similar theme to the welcome signs to the community.

**Potential of Clinton as an attractive location for manufacturing development:**

- No apparent observation of land available for a manufacturing facility.
- If land was available, it is anticipated that land costs would be reasonable in comparison to neighbouring communities.

**Visible listing of commercial and industrial real estate:**

- There was no visible listing or real estate office in the community

**Availability of real estate for sale for industrial or commercial purposes**

- There were no buildings or land with real estate signs in the industrial park
- There were available commercial properties for sale or lease on Hwy 97
- Though there was available commercial property the community did not give the impression of having an excessive supply of vacant and unkept properties.

**Professional, Commercial and Government Services****Convenience of banks and ATMs (location and hours):**

- Only one financial institution in the community – Integris Credit Union – offering banking and insurance services (including ICBC services).
- ATM's are available in the community.

**Adequacy of financial services:**

- It is not uncommon for a small community to only have one financial institution. Many smaller communities do not have any. Having the credit union is a competitive advantage for Clinton.
- Credit Unions are more apt to engage in the community over a national bank like RBC, BMO, CIBC, etc.

**Other available professional services:**

- There are limited professional services available.

**Government Services****Location of municipal offices:**

- Right downtown. Very nice heritage building and green space with benches.





### **Available and quality of information:**

#### **i) Community brochure/guide**

- Copies of the current and past month Clinton Lariat were available. The newsletter was professionally done and provided some good information on the community.

#### **ii) Business directory**

- No printed directory found.

#### **iii) Community profile**

- No community profile was found at the Village office; however, a mini profile is available on the website.

### **Adequacy of information for investment decisions:**

- There could be additional information available at the Village office to help with investment decisions. We met with the Economic Development Coordinator who was very friendly. However, the position is newly filled so very limited information was available.

## **Public Infrastructure and Planning**

### **Public Transportation:**

- As with most smaller communities, public transportation is very challenging. The Clinton Lariat, May 2019 edition, has a story about a new bus service for the community.
- There is a community service run by BC Transit that offers service for Clinton, Cache Creek and Ashcroft to Kamloops every Monday. This information was available in a brochure in local businesses and visitor information centre.

### **Sidewalks:**

- Adequate and available for most of the downtown area. Some of the sidewalks could be improved or expanded.

### **Landscaping, trees, etc.:**

- Clinton is located in a beautiful green, well-treed region. The downtown could have some additional beautification to enhance the visitor experience.

### **Public Restrooms:**

- Two public restrooms are available at each end of town. The one located at the north end are attractive, well signed with green space. It was good to see a sign posted right on the front door of the municipal offices indicating where public washrooms are available.
- Public washrooms are the number one reasons passers-by stop in a town.<sup>1</sup> One suggestion would be to have community



<sup>1</sup> 20 Ingredients of an Outstanding Downtown, Roger Brooks International

information on what services are available on a sign outside the washrooms in order to encourage people to stay, visit and spend some money.

#### **Street signage:**

- There was very limited street signage – both vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding signage, providing a visitor with information on what’s available in the community and other attractions.



#### **Pay phones, drinking fountains, benches, etc.**

- A payphone was available downtown – most communities do not have this available now that cell phones are so prevalent. We did not see a drinking fountain but there were a number of benches and other areas to sit down and relax including outside the public washrooms and the “Bucking Ham Palace Hotel”. During our visit this area was being used by a family who were visiting the community.

## **Planning**

#### **Appropriateness of land use (commercial, residential, green space, etc.):**

- Generally, residential and commercial/industrial development are concentrated. There are some nice green spaces and parks outside of the downtown core.

#### **Traffic or pedestrian congestion?**

- The traffic right through downtown is likely a mixed blessing. While it provides businesses with potential customers it creates additional noise, parking challenges and safety issues. The challenge of a community with a highway through town is to offer amenities and services to entice people to stop. The day of our visit there appeared to be a lot of people who were enticed to see what the community had to offer.

#### **Are Clinton’s facilities and infrastructure generally accessible for people with disabilities?**

- There are some businesses that were not accessible to people with disabilities, however, the Village facilities were all accessible.

## **Housing and Residential Areas**

#### **Overall quality, affordability and availability of housing in Clinton:**

- Quality seems mixed but affordability is good when compared to nearby markets.

#### **Most appealing and least appealing features of the housing in Clinton:**

- Many of the properties are generally well looked after.
- There are some older, heritage homes that offer a unique option for home buyers.

#### **Quality and availability of residential infrastructure (i.e. roads, sidewalks, lighting, public transportation, green space):**

- Some beautiful areas of green space in the community.
- The visit took place during day light hours, so lighting was not noticed.

## Education and Health Services

### Primary/elementary:

- The David Stoddart School is for kindergarten to grade 12 and is located at the south end of Clinton. We were not able to meet with anyone at the school but understand there are approximately 100 students.

### High school:

- The David Stoddart School is for kindergarten to grade 12 and is located at the south end of Clinton. We were not able to meet with anyone at the school but understand there are approximately 100 students.

### College/university:

- We did not notice any post-secondary facilities but were told that opportunities exist for the community through the Thompson Rivers University.

## Health Care Services

### Hospitals

- No hospital located within the community, however, two are within 40 minutes of the community.
- There is a health centre located in the centre of town with fully qualified nurse on staff. During our visit, the centre was not open.

### Physician and dentist offices and clinics:

- Other than the health centre we did not notice other health services in the community.

## Tourism

### Is there a strong tourism sector?

- The heritage buildings and the cluster of vintage/antique shopping are something many tourists are interested in. At the Visitor's Centre we were provided with a Historical Walking Tour booklet that provided a self-walking tour of 20 local heritage sites. There would be benefit to building upon the heritage and the niche shopping to offer something unique to visitors that other communities do not have. Perhaps a partnership of some form could be developed to market the community including print materials.

### Community slogan/brand:

- Where history meets adventure. The history theme is evident as you enter the community and having the Visitor's Centre within the museum is beneficial.

### Is there a well-known attraction or event/festival? Are the events/festivals held annually?

- Signs were clearly seen advertising the annual Ball and rodeo.

**Potential tourist attraction (natural or man-made):**

- The community is located in close proximity to Chasm Provincial Park which has outstanding vistas. As well, the redevelopment of Hunnies will enhance the community.

**Availability and quality of facilities serving the needs of visitors (i.e. Visitors Information Centres):**

- The tourism information centre is located right in the middle of town and well signed. We were welcomed by Bernice who provided some excellent information on the history of the community. She was able to answer all our questions regarding business and provided some good recommendations for things to visit in the community.

**Availability and selection of overnight accommodations in the community:**

- There are a number of accommodations to choose from and the ones we saw all were clean and looked good from the outside. We did not go inside the room, but our understanding was that they are clean, comfortable and quiet. For a smaller community it is not expected that brand hotels will be present, but we were impressed with the options that we saw.

**Availability of facilities to accommodate a conference and/or a large number of visitors:**

- The memorial hall, which we understand hosts the oldest continual heritage ball in Canada, offers an excellent location to accommodate events. The community also has an arena and curling rink all in close proximity to each other. These facilities could be used as an opportunity to attract groups to come to Clinton for training, sports or entertainment events and other options.

**Quality and accessibility of the public restrooms:**

- As previously mentioned, two public restrooms are available at each end of town. Both are attractive, well signed with surrounding green space.

**Quality and variety of restaurants:**

- On the recommendation from Bernice we had lunch at the Cariboo Lodge Hotel. The restaurant was busy during the time we arrived at 1:05 pm. The inside had only two tables available and the outside patio only had one. During the time we were there it continued to be busy with people coming and going. The service and food were good with lots of options to choose from.
- The other options we saw were the coffee shop – which seemed busy as well – the Cordial and the Old School's Bar & Grill which wasn't open.

**Recommendations by local residents on where to stay, eat and visit:**

- We received recommendations on the Cariboo Lodge Hotel and the Cordial.
- The coffee shop was recommended if we didn't want a full lunch but their cookies were highly recommended.



## Culture and Heritage

### What events are popular with residents:

- During our visit we heard about the annual heritage ball and the rodeo. We were told about heritage week where businesses and Village staff dress in vintage outfits.

### Do the residents feel there is a lack of community events?

- They felt that perhaps young singles wouldn't find much to do, however, young families and youth have lots of opportunities for recreation.

### Does Clinton have heritage buildings? Are they well maintained?

- Yes. For the most part they are well maintained. Building on the heritage that exists in the community would be beneficial and create a unique offering to visitors, especially partnered with the vintage/antique shopping options.
- The Palace Hotel is in the centre of town and looks like a great opportunity to experience history by touring through it. There is a sign providing information about the building but no sign on tour times or even if it's open. It was only after talking with a local resident that we discovered the building is privately owned and not open to the public. With such a prominent location in the community it would be helpful to visitors to have a sign indicating it is not open for public tours.



## Entertainment

### Community entertainment activities:

- Community appears to have limited entertainment options.

### Entertainment opportunities lacking in community (as perceived by residents):

- The residents we talked to think a movie theatre would be a great addition to the community.

### Is there a vibrant night life (as perceived by residents)?

- The residents we talked to told us there was not a vibrant night life and that young single people find there's not much to do.

## Recreation

### Availability of and appearance of parks:

- Reg Conn Park is located just off the downtown core, although we did not see any signage directing visitors to the park. The park is beautifully maintained and offers a playground, picnic area and public washrooms.
- We drove to Elliott Park but did not see any signage directing visitors to the park. We saw it out of the corner of our eye while driving up towards Kelly Lake. The park was closed and appears to be in the midst of an upgrade.
- Driving into the community we did see signs indicating trails.

### What do people in Clinton appear to do for recreation?

- Cross country skiing, camping, mountain biking, hiking, baseball, and rodeo. There is also an arena for hockey and other sports as well as a curling rink.

## Information from Community Residents

### **Were Clinton residents knowledgeable about the community:**

- The people we spoke with were knowledgeable about the community and wanting to share their information. Most seemed engaged in community activities. A particular nod goes to Bernice at the Visitor's Centre. As mentioned, she set the tone for the visit by her positive, friendly and welcoming attitude. The knowledge she has on the community far surpassed any expectations we had.

### **Did they refer you to someone else who would help?**

- Yes, in some case we were referred to the Village office.

### **Community pride (were residents positive or negative about their community:**

- The people we spoke to during our visit were positive about the community.

## Wrap-Up

### **Was our perception prior to the visit accurate?**

- The community visit provided more than we expected – the number of customers of the retailers and restaurant we visited was surprising. There was more activity in the downtown core than we anticipated.
- There is an opportunity to enhance the heritage and vintage/antique shopping.

### **What is the most outstanding feature of Clinton?**

- The people we met were very knowledge and excited to share more about the community.

### **Is Clinton a suitable location for a young family?**

- The parks and affordability of the area would be attractive to young families.

### **Is this community a suitable location for a retired person?**

- Yes. The local health centre and two hospitals within a 40-minute drive will be sufficient for many retirees' needs. There is a senior's centre to keep retired people involved and during our visit there appears to be excellent community support for residents.

### **Is this community a suitable location for a young single adult?**

- This would suit a young single adult who is engaged in recreational activities. Otherwise, it might be difficult to meet other single people and have a social life.

### **How is this community for a tourist?**

- The heritage and vintage/antique shopping could be a real draw for tourists if its enhanced and marketed as a destination.

### **Are there opportunities for locating a retail or service business here?**

- Yes. There is affordability for business space and if businesses are in the vintage/antique sector there is an opportunity to build on and enhance the industry.

**Are there opportunities to attract business investment here?**

- As in many smaller communities, labour is always a challenge for manufacturing businesses.
- We did not see any industrial lands that could be used for attraction of investment into the community.

**Five positive things observed about this community:**

- Heritage and history
- Friendly people
- Focused retail sector (vintage/antique)
- Proximity to larger markets for additional services and amenities
- Community Pride – community had a clean appearance

**Three potential opportunities available to Clinton:**

- Vintage/antique shopping experience
- Tourism
- Home-based businesses/virtual workers

**Five biggest obstacles/challenges observed facing Clinton:**

- Improved signage to direct visitors to other things to do in the area
- Cleanliness of industrial area
- Refreshed signage on historical sites
- Off street parking for RV's
- Façade improvements

**Lasting impression of Clinton:**

- The positive interactions we had with businesses and residents, along with the opportunity to combine your heritage with the vintage/antique shopping. Fort Langley (part of the Township of Langley) is an excellent example of a BC community that has successfully incorporated heritage values with antique shopping and attracts thousands of tourists a year from all over the world. In the United States, Lancaster PA, is a small town encased by unique antique shops and open markets. The small village of Adamstown is also making a big name for itself in the world of antiques and flea markets.

