

# BLUE SPRINGS

MISSISSIPPI



*First*  
**IMPRESSIONS**  
MISSISSIPPI STATE COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM

# *First* IMPRESSIONS

A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT FOR  
BLUE SPRINGS, MISSISSIPPI  
SITE VISIT CONDUCTED  
FALL 2009

“First Impressions” is a program designed to capture the thoughts and feelings of visitors as they observe for the first time the characteristics of a community. Following a very structured visitation program, a team of individuals with diverse backgrounds document their perceptions of both positive assets and challenges to social and economic growth in a community. Information contained in this report is a compilation of observations by a team assembled by the Mississippi State Community Action Team (MSCAT). This report is not intended as a recommendation for any specific future action or support for any one course of action already being implemented in a community. To maintain this sense of neutrality, the question/answer format used by the team members to make their assessments is rigidly followed in presenting the team’s overall assessment.

## **How easy was it to get information on the community that you were visiting? Did it accurately reflect what you saw? Did you have difficulties obtaining information on the community through a Web search?**

Using the Google search engine, “Blue Springs, Mississippi” returned the usual Web sites including Wikipedia, Topix, Epodunk, and City-Data. These sites provide general demographic and other data, but no localized information is available. Additionally, Web sites referring to the pending Toyota plant were also discovered. A placeholder for the URL [www.bluespringsmississippi.com](http://www.bluespringsmississippi.com) was found, which indicates that a local Web site may be in the developmental stages.

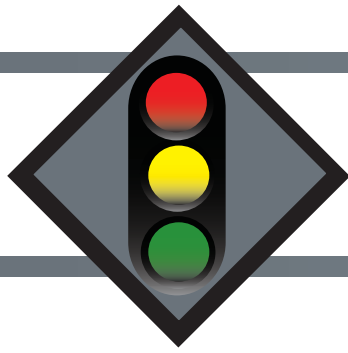


## The “Five Minute” Impression

**After taking a short drive through the community without stopping, what reactions did you have?**

The drive was very rural with timberland and some areas of open pasture. The most prominent features when approaching Blue Springs on Highway 78 was the Toyota plant and PUL Alliance water tower. When exiting off Highway 78 onto Highway 9, a large amount of road construction was observed. A post office, a few scattered homes and businesses, and town hall were seen along Highway 9. Secondary streets were primarily dotted with housing units and more rural landscape.





## Community Entrances

**What observations did you make when entering the community from major entrances (notice signs, streetscapes, major buildings, etc.)?**

Highway 78 is the major east/west artery through Blue Springs connecting Memphis and Birmingham. The cities of Tupelo and New Albany are only a few miles east and west respectively. This is a busy highway that is the future Interstate 22. State Highway 9 is the major north/south artery that runs directly through the village of Blue Springs. Scattered trash mainly in localized areas was sometimes seen along the roadsides. Welcome signs and traditional corporation limit signs were prominently displayed.

Approaching from the east or west on Highway 78, the Toyota plant is a massive structure located at the Blue Springs exit. Other than the plant itself, surrounding land is very rural with only a few billboards along the highway. Signs built to interstate specifications readily identify the community.

Approaching from the north or south on Highway 9, the main part of "town" consists of a few scattered homes and businesses. Again, the community is quaint and rural with a few vehicles on the road and at the service station. This particular day a lot of workers were doing construction work near Highway 78.





## Downtown Area

**What were your observations about the general appearance of the downtown area? Include comments on curb appeal, infrastructure, businesses, signage, public amenities, etc.**

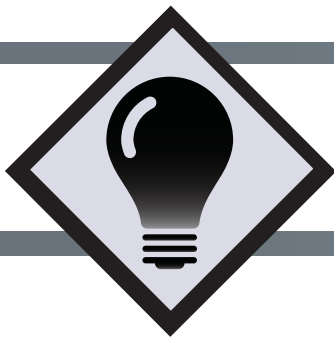
Blue Springs is a tiny village that has no defined downtown area. The post office and town hall buildings are located on Highway 9, but are not located really close to each other. Both buildings appear to be recently constructed and well-kept. One convenience store is located close to town hall, and it appeared to have a lot of business at the time we visited. The convenience store is located at the main intersection in town.

A wide range of housing was seen, which included single family and manufactured homes. Most homes appeared to be on large lots typically found in rural communities. Some recently constructed homes were seen as well. A couple of "For Sale" signs were noted around the area.

Some dilapidated structures and poorly maintained areas were evident along Highway 9. Several junk vehicles and piles of debris were observed.

No sidewalks or other amenities for pedestrians existed. No parks or recreational areas were found.





## Summary

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

Blue Springs is a quaint, rural community with good transportation access and located close to the regional manufacturing and retail hub of Tupelo. Obviously, the community's biggest asset is now the Toyota facility scheduled to open once economic conditions improve. Tremendous opportunities exist for service-related businesses to accommodate the large number of Toyota employees. Moreover, some employees may prefer to live in Blue Springs if housing and/or land is available.

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

Aside from the limited tax base available for infrastructure and other improvements, government officials and residents need to develop a blueprint for expected growth as a result of Toyota. A strategic plan to guide the community's future and a comprehensive plan to define building codes and ordinances to ensure that the community grows in a steady, controlled manner would be extremely beneficial. The construction of new commercial and residential development over the next few years as a result of Toyota will set the precedent for future development. Blue Springs desperately needs a vision and plan for what they want to be 10, 20 and 50 years in the future. The new development will have a tremendous impact on the city with or without a plan. However, having a vision and plan will ensure that this new development will impact the community in the most positive way possible.

Blue Springs must be ready for new development along Highway 78. Inevitably, there will be numerous gas stations and strip malls proposed for the 78/9 interchange. Once constructed, these businesses will be everyone's impression of Blue Springs. The community must keep this in mind when approving the appearance of these businesses. Again, this will set the stage for the future "first impressions" of Blue Springs. Fifteen years from now what will the entrances into Blue Springs look like? The answer to that question hinges on the decisions that leaders make right now.





# MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™

*Community Action Team*

## *First* IMPRESSIONS MISSISSIPPI STATE COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM

If your community is interested in participating in the First Impressions program, please contact us for further information:

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The First Impressions program has been used successfully to assist communities in several states following its creation by Andy Lewis, University of Wisconsin Extension Service, and James Schneider, director of economic development in Grant County, Wisconsin.

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