

# First Impressions Visit to Salem, Ohio

*by Norwalk, Ohio Team*

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The Norwalk team stops at Wendy's to write initial impressions, 10:30 AM:

- Bridge entering Salem needed enhancing (flags, baskets, banners)
- Appreciated vitality and retail variety of downtown area
- East side of town with newer "big box" development seemed too cookie-cutter
- Wendy's retail personnel provided helpful directions to City Hall



View from Wendy's parking lot, 11 AM

- As with most towns, there were the same stores we see everywhere else.
- Entrance from West of Salem was unremarkable – did not see any Salem signs
- Hospital and medical centers seemed convenient, but didn't see doctor's "complex"
- Good cell coverage throughout Salem



Entrance into Salem from another direction

- Nice impression of residential neighborhood
- This was the only "Welcome to Salem" type of signage we noticed



Began drive through town, 11:15 AM

- Site of beautiful clock was marred by plastic bag stuck in tree
- Appreciated availability of benches, but wondered why they faced the buildings instead of streets



View from road next to City Hall, 11:20 AM

- Very impressed with historic structure (especially chimneys) but wondered about dilapidated state of building

Traveled to older industrial area (no pictures taken)

- Wondered if Salem had pursued brownfields grant opportunities
- Did not seem like a vibrant industrial area due to lack of vehicles



Found community center, 11:30 AM (no pictures)

- Very impressive, modern-looking
- Liked connections with park, nature trails

Visited Waterworth Memorial Park (no pictures)

- No signage to get there, had to drive around a while
- Well worth the effort – nice ballfields, play areas
- Wondered about the lack of parking – do people park in the cemetery?

Stumbled on Salem High School, 11:45 AM

- Found back of school by accident; followed what appeared to be front entrance sign into the back
- Well-appointed athletic facilities (practice fields, gymnasium)



Parking downtown, 12:00 PM

- Downtown seems to have adequate availability of on street parking
- Narrow streets would seem to create difficult traffic conditions as people maneuver to park
- Noticed that some of the free parking lots had signs, but other lots seemed to be hidden – needs better direction signs to municipal parking





Looking for a place to eat lunch, 12:05 PM

- Sidewalks were quite narrow; led to the impression that Salem's downtown can be more pedestrian-friendly
- Like quaint feel of attractive lampposts
- Banners were nicely designed when observed up close, but as we noticed upon our initial entry into the downtown, they're way too small and hard to read to make an impression
- Noticed banners almost by chance; they didn't "work together" to create a stunning visual image of the town



Ate lunch at The Ice Cream Parlor, 12-1 PM

- Good hometown food in a place with hometown appeal
- Uncommunicative waitress lost the opportunity to leave an impression of friendliness; she didn't seem too enthusiastic about sharing information about Salem



Gersak/Dentler visit to Kolby's store, 1:10 PM

- Very impressed with downtown retail – good variety reminiscent of a mall
- Retail customer service here was excellent
- Clerk was very enthusiastic about Salem and upcoming Bicentennial Celebration – sold me a pin and provided the last brochure she had on hand right out of the display case



Downtown walking tour, 1:15 PM





Interior of retail stores, 1:20 PM

- Struck by eclectic nature of shops – one offered gift baskets, tanning and nails!



Downtown walking tour, 1:25 PM:

- Having an art institute is quite an amenity – good opportunities to share culture with visitors and community



Downtown walking tour, 1:30 PM:

- Buildings in need of repair/renovation
- Inconsistent signage made us wonder if there was a city sign code in place



Downtown walking tour, 1:30 PM:

- It's great to have a presence from the Salem High School Alumni Association right downtown





Downtown walking tour, 1:25 PM

- Just had to stop at Heggy's for ice cream and candy – worth the trip!
- Other locals (at publishing house) highly recommended this local icon



Downtown walking tour, 1:30 PM:

- The blue siding was rather disconcerting from an aesthetic standpoint. It seems that the city may not have any architectural guidelines governing this kind of appearance.



Downtown walking tour, 1:30 PM:

- Splendid view of unique 2<sup>nd</sup> story architecture from across the street
- Hobby Shop owner did not seem to care whether his store was clean and aisles were clear, but we were glad to see this kind of store open in Salem



Downtown walking tour, 1:35 PM:

- In the next block, came across a very lovely entrance to a ceramic shop – gave the impression that the owner cares very much about appearance



Downtown walking tour, 1:40 PM:

- Pleased to see that public parking lot was readily available and well-marked



Downtown walking tour, 1:40 PM:

- The leftover salt (?) gave an impression of this and other parts of the downtown that the bricks were cracking and perhaps unsafe
- Seems a shame to take the time to engrave the bricks and then leave them uncared-for
- Some bricks were clean, but many were not





Downtown walking tour, 1:40 PM:

- What a refreshing appearance!



Downtown walking tour, 1:40 PM:

- Dale loved the muscle car!
- The folks at the publishing house were very friendly (even if it was mistaken for an ice cream shoppe – they offered candy instead!)





Downtown walking tour

- The tanker and dump truck seemed to be the exception to cars-only downtown traffic – the bypass seems to be doing its job of keeping heavy truck traffic out of downtown, but doesn't seem to harm retail traffic



Downtown walking tour, 1:40 PM:

- Nice to have even a small place to sit and rest
- Appreciated concept of Liberty Centre



Downtown walking tour, 1:45 PM:

- A closeup view of some stores showed that windows were in desperate need of cleaning



Downtown walking tour, 1:45 PM:

- It was nice to see several bookstores, a variety of pubs/restaurants, men's clothing stores, women's clothing stores, etc., along with the gift shops in downtown Salem



Downtown walking tour, 1:50 PM:

- The huge Christian bookstore was impressive; excellent customer service
- Nice window displays at The Goodwill Store – neat, clean, attractive store layout



Downtown walking tour

- Small touches that make a big difference and a nice impression: the preservation plaques on sides of buildings and brickwork design with engraved names of supporters





#### Downtown walking tour

- It's great to locally-owned, independent coffee shops still thriving in a downtown setting
- Even better, a place to buy newspapers and magazines!



#### Downtown walking tour

- Lovely Historical Museum building; longer hours would enable mid-week visitors to make unscheduled visits





#### Visit to City Hall

- Relatively easy to find once acquainted with a map and verbal directions, but did not see any direction signs for visitors who may not have stopped to ask for directions



#### Inside City Hall

- First impression: dark and scary place, not welcoming to anyone (citizens and any other visitor)
- Couldn't easily find elevator on 1<sup>st</sup> floor – wondered about handicapped accessibility
- On 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, door to mayor's office was closed and imposing – did not seem like there would be an "Open Door" policy
- No central reception area where general questions could be asked





#### Inside City Hall

- Wandered down hallway on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor to find someone who could answer questions about where to go to open a new retail business in Salem
- The receptionist in the Housing/Planning & Zoning (Phyllis McKinley) was a wonderful representative of the City of Salem
- Phyllis was very friendly and took lots of time to answer every question we had, going out of her way to provide us the information we requested (and even gave us some information we didn't request!)



#### Driving downtown towards Salem Chamber building

- Impressive trolley program



Visit to Salem Chamber

- Beautiful building
- Very helpful staff



Driving on South Lincoln

- Impressive historic homes district



South Lincoln historic homes district



Driving tour of residential districts

- Very nice executive home areas







Entrance into Salem Industrial Park

- Very impressed with appearance of industrial park
- Appreciated listing of companies at entrance
- Good variety of manufacturers with room for expansion