

First Impressions

of

*Barron, WI
by Whitehall, WI
Visit Conducted October 20, 1994*

A program ~~for~~ community improvement

Developed by:

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Revised: 2/10/93

Photo Number 21

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Lots of cars in town but
no people on sidewalks
or steps so town seems empty



Photo Number 22

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Garbage cans - look neat,
clean and useful



October **28**, 1994

Our Whitehall team visited Barron on Thursday, October 20, **1994**. The weather in the morning was overcast and quite chilly. Around noon the clouds cleared off and the temperature warmed up.

Our team consisted of five people - two men and three women. Two team members are in retail business, one was a health service professional, one was an appointed local official and one was an educator.

A couple of things stood out about our visit. First was the lack of signage, particularly to the downtown business area. The second feature was the people. They were friendly without being gushy. They always tried to answer our questions. In addition, the community had a lot of traffic and seemed busy and well maintained.

Thank you for participating in a 1st Impressions exchange with our community. We appreciate the time and effort you've put into this program. We hope this exchange will prove to be a learning experience for both communities.

Sincerely,

Patricia L. Malone
CNRED Agent
Trempealeau County

Photo Number 19

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Bad roads - many uneven
badly kept roads



Photo Number 20

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Too many dead ends all over
town - bad traffic flow



I. What was my perception before visiting? What did I expect?

- (a) That it survived around Jerome Foods, expected an agriculture related community, also much tourism was expected.
- (b) My perception before visiting was of a small to moderate sized county seat with some manufacturing. I expected the downtown retail area to be losing vitality.
- (c) Knew it was an older city.
- (d) I expected to see an empty run down town with empty buildings that needed to be fixed up.
- (e) I had none. My ideal town would be a neat, well maintained residential area with a business district that has a common theme.

II. The "five minute" impression;

- (a) Very busy community, many businesses, lots of traffic.
- (b) Nice broad avenues with wonderful new signs welcoming you. Jerome Foods dominates the skyline. Highway 8 seems to focus on manufacturing and commercial enterprises. It was difficult to determine where the downtown retail area is.
- (c) Nice upbeat sign at W Highway 8 entrance, where was Main Street?
- (d) First Impression was positive, it is a town I wouldn't mind living in. The town seemed busy, neat and clean.
- (e) The town looks industrial. I did not see any business district. Nice sign on highway coming in.

III. Driving....evaluate EACH entrance.

- (a) Highway 8 West & East - nice highway - wide, adequate speed limit, good "Welcome Signs"; Highway 25 - pavement is good - no "Welcome Signs" - dangerous intersections on south side, too many message signs on all highways.
- (b) 25 South - No Welcome to Barron signs when entering the city; 25 North - Jerome Foods dominates skyline-the river/wetlands are very attractive-especially with fall foliage-need welcome sign-a back way into town; 8 West-wooden sign is gorgeous-must take old signs down-nice residential area; 8 East-wooden sign is gorgeous-must take old signs down-seems to be center of commercial and light industry-need better signs pointing to downtown (eye-level).

Photo Number 17

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Churches - all well kept
and there are many of
them and not very many bars

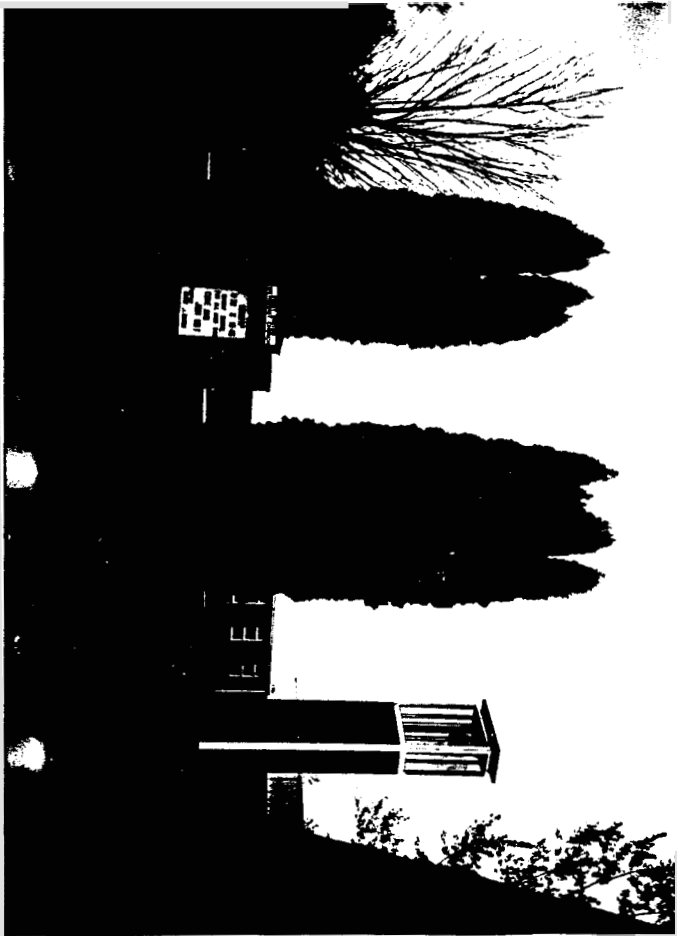


Photo Number 18

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

East Monroe Street - dangerous
intersection



- (c) East & West **8** both had nice signage but also have the old sign up, also needs to be removed; 25 North & South - needs same new signs - it is after all a main highway no matter how heavily traveled it is.
- (d) Highway **8** entrances were very nice, I liked the welcome signs. Highway **25** has no welcome signs and I think it would add to the town to have signs here.
- (e) No welcome to Barron from south on #25 south, **25** north - no welcome sign. Highway **8** west had two signs. The one closest to town I thought was the most attractive. Do not need the one furthest out!

IV. (a) Driving....evaluate the downtown business area;

- (a) Buildings looked good-all nice condition-well defined business district-good parking on street and parking lots-too many signs hanging out of buildings-too many message board signs.
- (b) In a central area - not spread out. Some buildings are well kept-others look real run down. Old bank (that's now an eye clinic) is a wonderful old building.
- (c) Poor signs for Main Street area.
- (d) The size of downtown was large and spread out. The signs didn't impress me. Many needed work, example, paint and better visibility. Parking was easily accessible and there was plenty of parking.
- (e) Signage - some not clear. Stores seemed adequate for population. Had a variety.

IV. (b) Driving....evaluate other business area:

- (a) Busy downtown-but no pedestrians on sidewalks-especially for a nice fall day-very good pedestrian crossing markings/lines.
- (b) Commercial area on **US 8** - mostly neat - easily accessible.
- (c) We never saw a sign for airport but came upon it in driving around. We do see it on the Barron County Map, also nothing saying its name.
- (d) The downtown main street was impressive but the side streets which consisted of mostly bars needs work because the buildings and signs need paint and clean up. The sidewalks also are cracked and uneven compared to Main Street.

V. Driving...comments on residential:

- (a) Very few homes stood out as nice but very few looked bad also. Residential areas were basically average.

Photo Number 15

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

School and Community Center -
nice part of the community



Photo Number 16

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Hospital - confusing to where entrance is



- (b) Smallish, modest homes. Most are well kept, but some are real beat up. North end of tour - residential area is very appealing, Angus farm is attractive.
- (c) Neat little houses.
- (d) I didn't notice many incredibly large houses and elaborate houses or very many run down houses. 90% of the houses and yards looked nice. The residential areas were clean and looked modern.
- (e) Seemed to be two distinct groups. Many older ones were not well maintained. Did see some beautiful new ones.

VI. Driving...comments on:

- a. street signs
 - (a) Good condition - easy to read
 - (b) **O.K.** need better signs to attractions, services and so on. City Hall was difficult to find
 - (c) Most streets had signs
 - (d) Street signs were difficult to locate quickly and on the first pass through town. I couldn't see the downtown sign, parking signs or school signs the first pass.
 - (e) No signs for school. Streets adequately marked. No sign for Community Center.
- b. traffic patterns/street conditions
 - (a) Rough roads, too many dead end streets, as a complete City Barron has the worst conditioned streets of any city I've been in (that is city wide).
 - (b) Traffic seems to flow well. Side streets are rough. But it seems to be very heavy.
 - (c) Lots of dead end streets, because of water ways.
 - (d) Traffic patterns were confusing with too many dead end signs. Streets were very bumpy and uneven with E. Monroe Street having a very dangerous intersection.
 - (e) Sign for park not very visible. Streets were rough in spots.

Photo Number 13

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

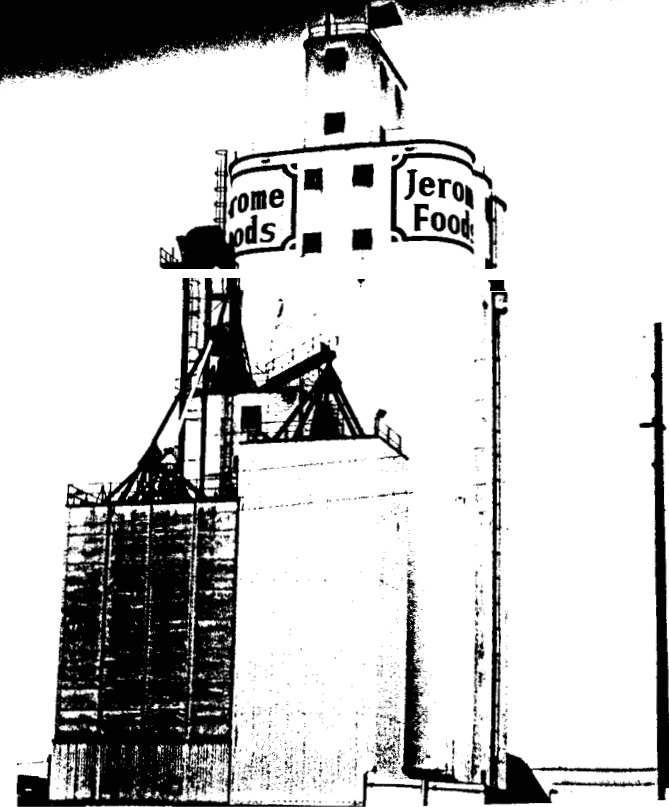
Event boards - too many and not professional



Photo Number 14

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Largest structure in Barron - central location and you can see this from afar



- c. welcome signs (at entrances)
 - (a) On Highway 8 - very nice - no signs on Highway 25.
 - (b) New signs are just great. Should take the old ones down.
 - (c) Very nice on Highway 8 East and West.
 - (d) Welcome signs were nice. Very large, I liked that. Nice color - visually impressive.
 - (e) No signs on 25 south and north.
- d. direction signs to parks, schools, hospitals/clinics, attractions, services (i.e. police), etc.
 - (a) To hospitals - good, to parks - need improvement, none to school/Civic Center.
 - (b) Plenty of signs to the hockey area. The parks just seem to spring up - need better signage.
 - (c) Some signs for parks, no signs for schools, followed sign for hockey area, then found Middle School, no signs for the Civic Center, have a perfect location for one at Highway 8 and the water, nice triangle location (street you turn for hospital and school - La Salle Avenue?).
 - (d) Hospital was easy to find. Parks were hidden, like they didn't want people to know about them. I didn't notice any attractions to Barron and/or signs for the police or fire departments. You don't see a sign for the golf course unless you drive up to it. On the south end of town there are no golf course signs.
 - (e) Pretty park. Could have a bigger sign, Did not see sign for Community Center.

VII. Driving....comments on industrial park/area:

- (a) Adequate signs - good appearing industrial park - seems busy
- (b) There is a sign - it might be more prominent - tied in with community signs. Has lots of potential for growth. Lots of space. Signs on some businesses aren't well defined.
- (c) Very large commercial area on 8 with Jerome Foods.

Photo Number 11

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Jerome Foods just dominates the skyline and entrance to the community. There is no doubt this is a turkey town.



Photo Number 12

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Another photo of Jerome Foods. This is a significant complex in how it shapes the look of your downtown (and no doubt your economy as well).



- (d) Signs for industrial park weren't very informative, example, no phone numbers or directions. I didn't notice anything new or any growth.
- (e) Signs O.K. Sign to business district wasn't clear. There seems to be room for expansion.

VIII. Driving....comments on schools:

- (a) Nice schools - great Community Center - back side of high school seemed cluttered.
- (b) Hard to find - Community Center is gorgeous - play up the signage. The school/Community Center/hospital are the heart of your city. Make it easier for us to find your heart.
- (c) No signs to school - nice school and Civic Center.
- (d) School looked very impressive and new. Plenty of parking in the school lot.
- (e) Nice. Good parking. Impressive looking athletic building.

IX. Driving...comments on parks, play grounds, athletic facilities. etc.:

- (a) For a nice community such as Barron, their parks and recreation areas seemed to fall short. Their main park - Anderson Park - has poor traffic flow. Pool (outdoor) looked good. Community Center was great.
- (b) Signage is poor - like location right along the river. The foot bridges are attractive. Parking area is beat up. Olson Park is small but very attractive.
- (c) Very few signs, small for parks. No sign for school and Civic Center.
- (d) The parks looked **run** down, the ball field needed work. The pool looked nice, the tennis courts were worn and needed resurfacing. The parks didn't seem easily accessible or open to every day use.
- (e) Nice facilities in park. Hospital - bigger signs - nice. Nice Community Center. Could utilize your streams and lakes more.

X. Driving....comments on other:

- a. hospitals/clinics
 - (a) Well signed.
 - (b) Reasonably good signage - but maybe the signs could be bigger.

Photo Number 9

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Welcome sign - gorgeous, well-designed



Photo Number 10

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Pond - water is always attractive but you don't take enough advantage of your waterfront



- (c) Hospital easy to find but hard to spot where to go once you get there. Entrances are confusing.
 - (d) The hospital/clinic seemed confusing because of all of the vehicles at the school. It was hard to tell where the entrance to the hospital/clinic was and parking for the clinic was confusing.
 - (e) Large, Good location with clinic, retirement apartments and school close by.
- b. billboards/advertising
- (a) Way too many message board signs on Highway 8 and business area. These detract from appearance signs on buildings. For the most part were good. Too many hanging signs.
 - (b) Seemed minimal (that's good!).
 - (c) Most billboard signs in good condition.
 - (d) The ad boards were all over and didn't look very professional or neat. The town needs overall improvements on their billboards/signs. I didn't notice many advertisements.

XI. Walking around....comments on businesses (physical part);

- (a) Neat business area, wide, nice sidewalks, no pedestrians for such a nice day!
- (b) Unified central business district off the main drag. Signage showing the way to downtown area was very poor. Some stores had very attractive displays - some didn't. Downtown didn't seem overly dirty or clean. **Lots** of on-street parking.
- (c) Norman Bank Building - looked very nicely kept even the back side was.
- (d) The structure of the buildings seems quite sturdy and new. Signs weren't uniform and all were different sizes and shapes and looked confusing and messy. I only noticed two empty buildings.
- (e) Most businesses seemed neat and well maintained. Instead of trying to modernize old buildings I think it would have been more attractive to return them to their original beauty.

XII. Walking around....comments on people;

- (a) Very few people on streets, when asked questions, people seemed to know answers or were willing to find out.

Photo Number 7

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

First Bank - newer construction than some - but done in the feel for community



Photo Number 8

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Elarron.

Barron Train Depot - Gorgeous, what potential, but it has deteriorated greatly. Railroad/transportation buildings add a lot to the look of a community.



- (b) People seemed friendly (didn't stare). They answered questions readily if you asked. They would smile back (they don't in some places).
- (c) Yes, the people were very friendly and helpful, went in to ask about bank building, very willing to answer questions.
- (d) Every person I talked to smiled, was polite, and answered all questions and were very helpful.
- (e) Most people very friendly and helpful. I did receive some grumbling from City Hall when someone had to get up and get me some information.

XIII. Community information: comments on.....

- a. community brochure (tourist type)
 - (a) I was impressed with brochures - up-to-date and attractive & available.
 - (b) Bright, colorful - lot of ads.
 - (d) The brochure was nice, there was a place on Main Street that had announcements that I thought was neat.
 - (e) Good. Very helpful. Good idea to have removable center to keep flyer updated.
- b. businesses/attractions brochures or directory
 - (a) Very good.
 - (b) Good directory - I'd try to see if there was a way to arrange it so there weren't any pullout sheets. I really liked the map inside. Great touch!
 - (c) Asked about the summer festivals, simple information given.
 - (e) Good listing of services and professional offerings.
- c. community profile (demographic, industrial type information for prospective business people, etc.)
 - (a) Very good.
 - (b) Didn't get one - had information on water and electric utilities.

Photo Number 5

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Norman Bank Building -
very nicely preserved,
brick in good condition

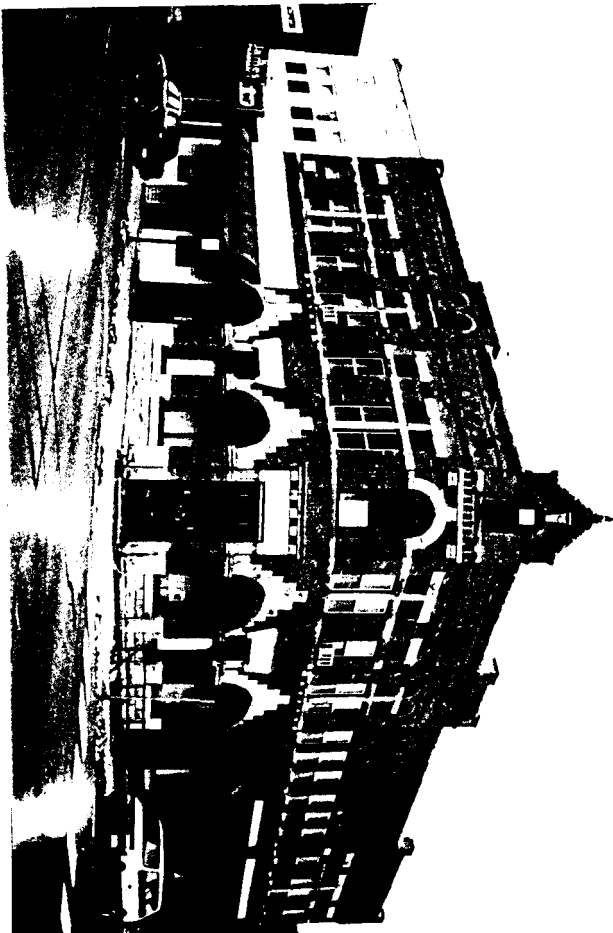


Photo Number 6

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Back side of bank - stucco
looks neat and clean,
alley looked kept up



- d. map
 - (a) Very nice.
 - (b) The map in the business directory was handiest. The other map was the size of a placemat. It wasn't as convenient.
 - (d) Map was nice and professional and very helpful.
 - (e) Easy to follow. Contains adequate information.
- e. other (i.e. bulletin/notice boards, kiosks, etc.)
 - (a) Too many message boards on Highway 8 and downtown.
 - (b) Some areas - they seemed neglected.
 - (d) The downtown notice board was a good idea.

XIV. City Hall...describe your visit:

- a. appearance of facility, including signing
 - (a) Very neat.
 - (b) Older outside appearance. Very spacious inside. This was not the easiest place to find. It doesn't attract attention the way most municipal buildings do.
 - (c) No sign pointing to City Hall but small sign on Main Street.
 - (d) City Hall signage was hidden to the eye and hard to find. The appearance was neat, nice and clean but the inside seemed small and it smelled musty and old smelling.
 - (e) Clean. Well marked.
- b. helpfulness of staff
 - (a) Courteous - willing to handle questions - information was available.
 - (b) I had to wait a short while for service, but they readily answered any questions.
 - (d) The staff was very helpful and friendly but didn't volunteer any extra information or knowledge, just what we asked for.

Photo Number 3

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Vanguard Insurance - needs to be restored to old self

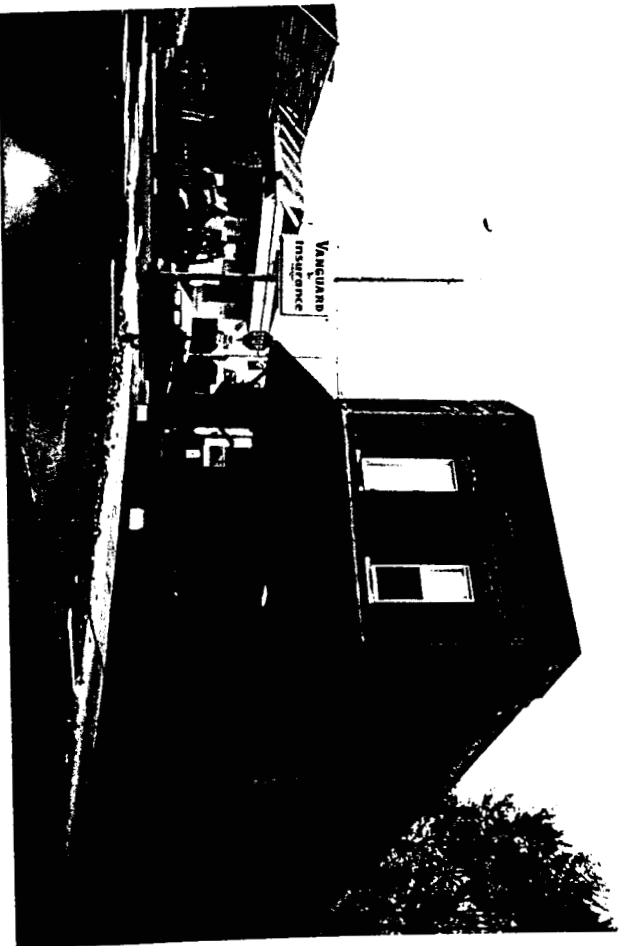
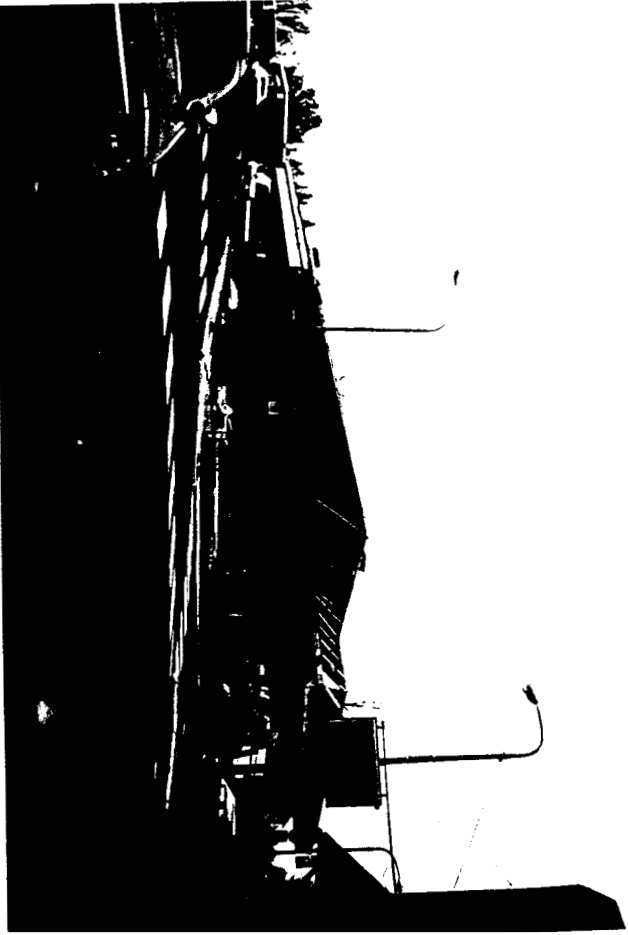


Photo Number 4

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

New construction - s^hows activity



- (e) When I went in the employee was not very interested in getting up to get information.
- c. Courthouse (County)
 - (a) Very neat (almost noon) - friendly people - good information available.

XV. Chamber of Commerce....describe your visit

- a. did people know where it was
 - (a) No full time office, City Hall made information available.
 - (b) They didn't think there was a place, but there was an organization. They referred us to City Hall.
 - (c) No Chamber but where told it is a group of businesses, any information can be gotten at City Hall.
 - (d) ?
 - (e) We were told there was no office for Chamber.
- b. comment of information available
 - (a) Available at City Hall and County Courthouse.
 - (b) NA
 - (d) ?
- c. comment on staff
 - (b) NA
 - (d) ?
- d. other (hours, appearance, locations, etc.)
 - (b) NA
 - (d) ?

Photo Number 1

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Gargulak Realty Building -
needs repair, nice older
building, need painting of
enclosed stair step



Photo Number 2

Please describe your reasons for taking this photo as it portrays physical qualities that add to or detract from the "image" of downtown Barron.

Gerry's Gifts - quaint
looking building like awnings



XVI. Other stuff...

- a. public restrooms (available, condition, etc.)
 - (a) Didn't see any.
 - (b) Didn't see any.
 - (c) Did not look for any.
 - (d) I didn't notice any public restrooms.
- b. payphones (working, phonebook intact, etc.)
 - (a) None on streets (that I noticed).
 - (b) Didn't see any.
 - (d) There is a need for public phones because I didn't see a phone to use.
- c. parking
 - (a) Very good - several parking lots and areas were available.
 - (b) Excellent.
 - (c) Lots of parking areas but not well maintained.
 - (d) Parking was very adequate and plenty of room to fit large vehicles at all businesses and streets.
- d. water fountains, benches, etc.
 - (a) No water fountains, limited benches but enough - nice garbage receptacles.
 - (b) Some benches, didn't see any fountains. Nice, big trash receptacles that are readily available.
 - (d) There were three benches I noticed and two were being used. I think more benches would add to the community and downtown area. Need for a water fountain is also an idea for Barron.
- e. public library
 - (a) Old and small - well maintained. Major handicapped access problems in future - too bad, for such a nicely kept building, no immediate plans to update.

Results of Visitor Photography

On the following pages are the photos and comments that team members took on our visit to Barron.

It is significant to note that three of the **22** photos feature Jerome Foods. Clearly, the facility stood out in our minds during our visit.

We hope these photos are helpful to you **as** you begin to visualize and develop community revitalization strategies for your city.

Wrap UD

A. Using your "senses"

1. What does the community **TASTE** like?
 - (a) Bakery good to average • Restaurant Harvest Inn-average, good service.
 - (b) The community tastes cinnamony (the bakery makes great bagels).
 - (c) Tried bakery • very good cookies • very attentive staff.
 - (d) The taste did not come to me. There was not a positive or negative taste sensation that I can describe.
 - (e) Bagels and cookies.
2. What does the community **SMELL** like?
 - (a) None noticeable.
 - (b) It smelled like fall.
 - (c) Smelled comfortable.
 - (d) It smelled fresh and clean due to the cleanliness of the community. It reminded me of a smaller town than it actually was.
 - (e) Fresh air.
3. What **SOUNDS** did you hear?
 - (a) Only traffic sounds.
 - (b) Lots of traffic sounds.
 - (c) Normal city sounds.
 - (d) It seemed very quiet and empty sounding. No loud or obvious sounds.
 - (e) Traffic.
4. What did the community feel like (emotional response, i.e. cold/warm, crowded/deserted, inviting, etc., or physical response, i.e. rough streets, etc.)
 - (a) Emotional = cool, sidewalks were deserted • but much traffic, stores were empty. streets (except for state highways) were very rough.

- (b) The business directory. We need to begin an inventory and design a layout.
 - (d) Start a central information billboard for various community events and notices
- D. What will you remember most about the community *six* months from now:
- (a) Barron is a very nice, active community with a high traffic volume.
 - (b) The water - there are many beautiful rivers and creeks that meander through the city. They have the potential to add something special to the community's character.
 - (c) Very busy highway on the east side with entry on small lake and the Jerome Foods building.
 - (d) That it is a neat, clean, professional town that seemed quite and low key.
 - (e) Wide streets and large turkey plant.
- E. Other comments
- (a) Many churches - all nicely kept with parking lots provided.
 - (b) You do identify historic sites. Lots of dead ends. The golf course is just beautiful, why weren't folks out? The heart of the community (the high school, community center and hospital) were not easy to find. Welcome people to that part of your community (using signage); it's very special.
 - (c) With all the traffic, must be some way to get them to stop. But then, maybe they do.
 - (d) I didn't feel that there is any attraction to Barron. I was impressed and wouldn't mind living there but there's nothing that will make me go back to Barron. *Also* it seemed in the middle of nowhere and hard to find. Improvements = more eating places, supper club, more things to do for kids, possibly movie theater, etc.

- (b) The streets were busy with cars, but there wasn't a great deal of foot traffic. The side streets were quite rough. The people were warm but not gushy.
- (c) People friendly and willing to answer questions. Streets may not be in **as** good of a condition as possible.
- (d) It felt cold and deserted, very few people walking on the streets but there were plenty of cars on the streets.
- (e) Warm, friendly and inviting.

B. List the 5 most positive things you observed about the community:

1. (a) Many businesses
 (b) Unified central business district (take advantage!)
 (c) Friendly when you talked to people
 (d) Clean looking and smelling town
 (e) Good variety of retail stores
2. (a) Nice signs and banners
 (b) Golf Course
 (c) Seemed busy
 (d) Many well to do businesses
 (e) People friendly
3. (a) High traffic volume
 (b) **New** signs are great - colorful, welcoming
 (d) Friendly people
 (e) Town clean
4. (a) Very good pedestrian crossing markings
 (b) Active manufacturing areas/businesses
 (d) Plenty of parking at businesses
 (e) Room for industrial growth
5. (a) Few empty buildings/homes for sale
 (b) Water!
 (d) Room for expansion in town if desired
 (e) Nice community building

C. Describe ONE idea that you will steal for use in your own business/community and describe how you will start to implement it within the next 72 hours:

- (a) Pedestrian crossing markings