

First Impressions:

A Program for Community Assessment & Improvement

Report for the Community of Alma

August 22, 2009

Visit by Ferryville Tourism and Promotions Board

Aimee Wickert- Business Owner

Kristy Fisher- Tourism and Promotions Board Member

Jeanne Rutter- Tourism and Promotions Board Member, Retired

Sherry Quamme- Nurse, Hospital Administrator

Deb Lomas- Certified Medical Assistant

Laura Brown- Crawford County University of Wisconsin Extension



This report was compiled by Laura Brown, Community & Economic Development Educator, Crawford County UW Extension with help from program assistant Sharon Steele

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andy.lewis@uwex.edu www.uwex.edu/ces/cced

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Prior To Your Visit

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

- Quaint river town
- Shops, restaurants, scenery, architecture
- A typical river town
- Main street along the river with few businesses
- Know there is a dam
- Know where I sent fish reports
- Beautiful river town with people committed to their culture
- Wings over Alma well known
- Not sure about the economy.
- Scenic

How easy was it to get information by mail and telephone about the community you are visiting? Are you satisfied with the quality of information received? Did the information arrive in a timely fashion?

Quality of online materials:

Average Team Score: **8**

- Website has lots of info. needs map of highlights
- Lots of info., Google - Several sites, Travel Wisconsin – had to search for Alma
- Provides e-mail links to Chamber, Wings over Alma. Very helpful



The Five Minute Impression

- Well kept, nice Main St.,
- LOUD downtown but great places to stop.
- Great signage heading North.
- From the North approach, headed South is well marked also.
- Numerous arts shops.
- Coffee shop, bakery, Kwik Trip.
- Not sure where I might stay. Thought Rivers Edge was a revised motel but realize it's a residence apt. bldg.
- Neat village. Marina
- Dairyland Power – from south
- Parks – a couple
- Marina
- Busy community
- Interesting town
- Mix of homes and retail
- Clean
- No large retail (normal retail), grocery, clothing
- I felt this was an older established community.
- Housing on one side seemed to be a little run down
- Dairy land Park
- Rieck's Lake Park
- Narrow shoulders going South
- Natural Beauty
- South entrance Dairyland Power
- Hwy 27 W natural beauty – no signage

- Hwy 37 E very scenic
- Middle class, older and newer homes family
- Recently paved roads
- Nice landscaping
- From 35 - no signage
- Nice marina – building house boats
- Coffee ground – cute friendly, good location on main street , coffee, gifts bag
- Buena Vista Part – well marked
- Scenic drive from town –nice parking
- Alma hotel – lunch, diner, reasonable price

- A very long town, very scenic with interesting shops.
- Most places well maintained, but some needed work.
- Very beautiful setting between the river and the hills.
- I wondered where the school was.
- Steep hills and steps made the town seem very quaint (this was really cool).
- A lot of planters and flowers (very beautiful).

Community Entrances

ENTRANCE #1: Hwy 35 North

Average Team Score: 6.85

- The power plant was the first thing that I saw. I did not notice an entrance sign though I was told there was one.
- Coal power plant, no clear signage
- Dairyland Power – 2 smoke stacks
- Dairyland Stacks – first thing to
- Village sign hard to see
- Older homes that needed to be cleaned up a bit.
- Smoke stacks from Dairyland Power

ENTRANCE #2: 35 - South (Main St.) – Buena Vista Dr

Average Team Score: 8.25

- Hard to tell where the town really started. Stretched over very long
- Gorgeous view
- Better road
- Clean – closer to the river
- More scenic, river and greenery
- Very scenic



ENTRANCE #3: Hwy 37 > 35 South

Average Team Score: 7

- Panoramic – Scenic, Quaint. Vista Drive not seen from 35
- Went out as far as Buffalo County Shop
- Uneventful scenery
- Vista Drive off 37 – couldn't see from 35
- Good road – more rural setting than N 35



ENTRANCE #4:

- Lots of curves – comes into 2nd street
- Curvy steep well maintained

OTHER ENTRANCES

- Boat landings – South, just landing. North marina
- Marina – Not sure about parking.
- Lots of cars – need more room.
- I posed as a person with a boat purchase coming up and wanted to know the cost of renting a slip if we came up river and wanted to stay over night. \$20/foot and I said we had a 30 ft. boat! Very helpful employee. Door was locked to office. Note on door said staff was at the gas pump. I walked all over and couldn't find that pump.

Housing and Residential Areas



**Quality, affordability, and availability of housing.
Average Team Score: 6.75**

Quality

6.4	Existing/Older Homes	6.8	New Homes
6.6	Housing for Seniors	6.8	Apts/Rentals
6.4	Vacant lots for new homes		

- Beautiful riverside apartments. Alma Hills – nice locations, lot kind of pricey.
- Found senior housing apts. Near Court House. Wonderful Victorian Homes, Vintage Housing
- New home lots outside downtown

Affordability

- Didn't get much chance to price anything
- Lots of rentals
- Mix of mid income level housing seen. Not sure there are avail. Building sites for upscale housing/construction. Have to be here, somewhere in area.
- Appears to be mostly mid income
- No – mostly middle class (income)
- Real estate office closed

Availability

7.5 Existing/Older Homes
7 Housing for Seniors

6.5
5
6.5

New Homes
Apartments/Rental Housing
Vacant lots for new homes

- Not many for sale
- Noticed only a few for sale signs
- Court house, Municipal offices, jail, and Sherriff's Dept. Central but in middle of residential area.
- I didn't really notice many existing houses for sale.



Most appealing and least appealing features of the housing in this community

- The most appealing thing to me was how the houses were layered up the streets. It made for a very beautiful view of the town's greatest asset. Great in the summer. Least appealing would be the very steep side roads in a snowy Wisconsin winter.
- River– scenes, targeted to tourists, Didn't see any affordable subsidized.
- Housing is mixed. Right on Main Street there are homes and businesses side by side. Looks like some are rentals. River Edge very attractive. Homes on vista Drive are a mix. Attractive features are the historic architecture, homes with scenic views yet not seen from Hwy 35. Some homes are not kept up, trash in yard, need paint & repair. Back of some properties facing river need work.
- Most appealing – older well-kept homes and shops. Least – mix of unrelated retail (art shop –car repair)
- Some of the architecture of the older homes and buildings was really great.
- The first homes on Main St. not as well kept – first impression.

Comment on the quality and availability of residential infrastructure

- Roads in good shape. Sidewalks uneven – not all streets. Green space – nice little niches for flowers and bench space green space on main needs work.
- Roads 35 good. Residential small – some one lane. Sidewalks – downtown – part of

residential. No publications, bike trails, little green space.

- Hiking training to Buena Vista Park. Stairway system to navigate from Main Street to upper streets and areas. Very steep side streets. Winter fun??

Appeal Rating Category

Overall appeal of housing to the following populations (1=Not Appealing, 10 =Very Appealing):
Average ratings for each:

3	Single young adults	5.8	Senior citizen
5.2	Young families	4	Upscale/professional
7.4	Middle income		

Please comment on your observations:

- Did not see new development.
- This looks like more for middle age people to people just retiring
- Most homes average. Town needs parks and attractions for kids of young families
- Getting around town for seniors has to be difficult. Steep streets, uneven sidewalks, all retail and most buildings on main had steps at entrance
- Low score for young adults – nothing to entice. Low score for seniors – steep streets.
- You would need to be in love with river life and be a hardy person who is happy to drive for services. Not sure the school system is large enough to be appealing to young families. Senior citizens have a senior center, near Winona State University and Medical Services which is positive.
- Upscale housing is not apparent. Must be some in the township. Beautiful area but you would need to be willing to develop your own acreage.
- City Hall – no staff right away – waited a minute. She directed me to folks who have rentals available (#'s). Run about \$350. Good housing access to Main St. Not able to easily talk to realtor – seems to be overpriced
- From my observations – I did not notice activities for younger families with children to do (ie: parks, swim pool). Also town in general did not look very handicap friendly for the older crowd.

Education, Health, Social and Emergency Services

Education

Comment on the availability and appearance of schools.

Pre-school/Kindergarten/Head Start

- All in one area. Grounds are clean. Too far out of town limits, too isolated.
- All together. Small but well kept. Buses adequate. Clean (referencing Pre-school/Primary and High School)
- Small district – Alma/Nelson. 200 kids k-12, 16 in Sr. class
- Unable to assess. Kindergarten avail at the joint district school north of Alma
- All levels of education in one school. Looks well kept up but older. The school

personnel (Principal and superintendent) very helpful and informative. All the way from the superintendent to the teachers have been with the district for many years. Classes are small. ACT scores high (some of the best in the area). The school offers one AP class.

Primary/Elementary/Middle School

- Available

High School

- No- Available - very small classes. Can be both positive and negative.

College/University

Winona state University. UW Eau Claire, UW LaCrosse, Vocational Schools in LaCrosse.

What do residents (young and old) think about the quality and availability of schools?

- Quality education. High SAT scores. Small classroom sizes
- Senior student - not happy with choices
- Young man – no quality
- High School Senior Student - "Very tiny." 16 in the incoming Senior class. 225 K-12 total. Nelson-Alma joint district. Resident with second grader commented that classes are about 20-30 students. Likes the small classes.

Overall, how would you rate the adequacy of schools for a community of this size?

Average Team Score: 5.5

- Too confined. Small
- Too isolated – out of town too far. Friendly. Had better curriculum than looks like
- How long can the population support a school district? Consolidation a future issue?

Health Care Services



Comment on the availability and apparent quality of healthcare facilities

Hospitals:

- 1st responder or maybe EMT's squad located mid-town along with police department and fire department. Hospital within 16 miles.
- Wabasha "not so good." Other clinics La Crosse, Rochester 1-2 hours away.
- Franciscan Skemp Clinic, Drugstore, Dentist office, Chiropractor. Hospital:

Winona – 30 min. away. Eau Claire: Hosp. and clinic, La Crosse, Rochester and May.

- None. Wabash – 8 miles

Physician, dentist, optometrist, and other medical offices and clinics:

- Most residents seek care out of the area in close by communities.
- Dentist office all we saw. Clinic – Gunderson
- Franciscan Skemp clinic. Dentist Office
- Dentist, clinic
- Seem to be a lot of them in town
- Local clinic open M-F. Also affiliated with Mayo. Great for a small town.

Long-term care, assisted living, and nursing home facilities:

- Subsidized Sr. housing near courthouse. No assisted living or nursing home seen.
- Didn't see any

Other health services (e.g., Chiropractor, psychotherapy, naturopath, massage, etc.):

- Didn't see any.
- Emergency EMS in Center of village – very positive.
 - There was a chiropractic clinic mid-town.

How would you rate the adequacy of health care services for a community of this size?

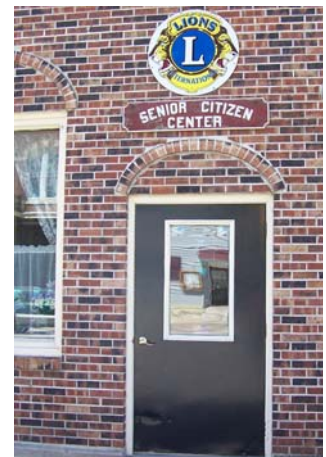
Average Team Score: (3 ratings) 6.33

- Nice to see the ambulance and clinic close and centrally located.
- Probably go to Winona or Wabash for major healthcare. (note: 30 min. south to bridge to Winona)
- Good – at least a clinic

Social Services

Social services available (e.g., day care, senior center, counseling, etc.)

- Church day care. Senior center activities and meals
- Church day care. Senior center. Has aging program for Buffalo County
- Day care and church. Sr. Center on Main St., County Soc Services in annex bldg
- Service center serves 40 each day – very accessible
- They had a senior center mid-town. Did not seem to be adequately handicap accessible.



Overall, how would you rate the level of social services for a community of this size?

Average Team Score: 7

Civic

Are there a variety of not-for-profit organizations and clubs within the community?

- The bird watching center was a very nice touch. I did not notice any other.
- Some checked in with library, Lions, etc. doesn't look like much for younger folks.
- Theatre, Wings over Alma, Historical society, Heritage Hall.
- Wings over Alma, Historical society, Heritage Hall
- Wings over Alma, Lions, VFW

Overall, how would you rate the level of nonprofit/civic services for a community of this size? Average Team Score: (3 ratings) 6.67

Emergency Services

Overall, how would you rate the police, fire, ambulance, and emergency medical service facilities? How do local residents feel about these services? Average Team Score: (3 ratings) 8.33

- Police, fire, ambulance attached to city hall on Main St.
- All services located middle of downtown
- In heart of town, fire, EMS, city hall – on river. Hosp Winona, Eau Claire, La Crosse.
- Located conveniently in the middle of town.

Local Economy

What is your impression of the health of the local economy?

- Very attractive and charming town for the most part. It had many quaint little shops.
- Seems vibrant for a small town, buildings being renovated, stores green
- Seasonal, so-so, good combo of primary business and sec shops. Some open store fronts. Nice mix of retail and other businesses. Boutique Village.
- Seasonal Economy
- Hanging on

Downtown

Could you locate the downtown easily? If not, why did you have difficulty finding it?

- Most business were on the main drive.
- Yes Downtown on Hwy 35 – easy to find

**Overall appearance of the downtown
Average Team Score: (4 ratings) 7.25**

- The flowers and giant flower pots were a beautiful



touch. Most buildings were very attractive and well kept. There were a few in the middle of the well kept that were not as nice or kept up. Took away from overall appearance.

- Mostly older buildings, signage good, benches and some small green areas
- Mostly older buildings, signage good, clean
- There were a lot of landscape in most areas. One or two places were a bit junky.

Variety of shopping in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 6.75

- Many quaint shops although I noticed that many were not open during the week. I found this to be kind of odd during the summer months for such a touristy type area.
- Very good – tourist shops, dry goods very limited, clothing, groceries, hardware
- Mostly antique shops and art shops, bars and restaurants, no clothing, grocery store, hardware
- Mostly tourist fare
- It was a unique experience. They had a variety of different things you would not typically see in a small village. The only place to really get groceries and ordinary items was the Kwik Trip

Customer service you received in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 9.25

- Excellent!
- Very good service, very friendly
- Everyone very friendly, most businesses seemed to be working together
- Most areas were very accomodating and friendly. The café we ate at seemed a bit busy. One young gal seemed to be having a bad day and did not greet us happily.
- Very friendly and helpful
- Everyone that I talked to were exceptionally nice and willing to share info about the area and other establishments.

Signage in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 7.33

- Good signage (2)
- Good, tasteful
- Seemed adequate



Window displays in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 7

- Interesting
- Nice, attention grabbing
- Not professional
- Not overly done, simple

Variety and quality of merchandise in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 6.5

- A lot of artsy/craftsy type items. Lacked in the grocery area. A great place to souvenir shop but would be a hard place to live because of grocery shopping.
- Very nice, Coffee Grounds is super. Table by window with river view. Coffee shop displays are eclectic. Wine shop is cluttered, hard to navigate. Art Studies – nice mix. Ice Cream Shop is cramped.
- Good variety of antiques and art work. Not much else.
- Tourist merchandise.
- These shops were more geared for people who were more interested in antiques and more arts and craft items that I typically would not be interested in.



Mix of facilities and services in the downtown

- The marina seemed to have all the recreation – did not see anybody using the facilities. Did not see any younger people using any of these.
- Drug store, NAPA, vehicle repair, insurance, lawyer, bank. Mix of facilities was good but lacked a variety resident retail.
- Lawyer, realtor, bank, boutique type shops, hotel rooms, bars/restaurants.
- Nice distribution of benches/flowers/carve outs along Main Street. Some businesses like Auto Repair/tire store inconsistent with business district. Some places on river side of Main Street in poor condition. Open space between buildings varies in quality. Some spots look down on nice terrace or weeds, pickup truck and beer cans. Wings Over alma is great tourist info. stop. Convenient parking .great signage to Buena Vista Park (How did you get DOT to do this for you?) Dairyland Power greets you when coming from the South. Necessary but not very picturesque. Nice mix of apts, business, river, shops

Rate and comment on the quality and availability of parking in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 8.4

- Very good. Really like the white curbs with the 1 hour parking signs. Some challenges finding parking by Alma Hotel when we stopped in for lunch. Then left via the 5000lb limit bridge/alley – Exciting.
- Lots of 1 hour parking – police patrolled. Plenty of spaces.
- Adequate parking. Didn't have problem finding space.
- Parking was available on the street which seemed sufficient.

Rate and comment on the quality (appearance, adequacy, etc.) of lighting in the downtown. Average Team Score: 7

- Regular type street lighting

- Did not see. Sunny day.

Does the downtown play a role in tourism? Is there room for improvement?

- Yes and yes – more prominent tourist info. Signage. Wings Over Alma needs a bigger tourist information sign
- Wings over Alma – small tourism information sign could be bigger and more noticeable. We went by twice before we saw.
- Almost all tourism.
- The downtown is totally geared for tourism. Most business were only opened seasonal or Thurs – Sunday.

Describe the residential housing mix in the downtown (apartment, single detached).

- Nice apartment building. Mostly single family.
- Apartments on Main St. Residential mostly single family.
- apartments, single family, subsidized housing by Court House. It was a little confusing.

Would you find the downtown to be a desirable place to live?

- LOUD! Lots of truck traffic along 35 – creates some conflict.
- No – not sure about other developments avail out of town. ???- little view. I like woods, space, peace.
- No – too much retail. Maybe in 35 & 37 area
- Yes, because of view. No because of traffic
- Not really – more older and historical setting.

Were there any government or nonprofit activities that serve as traffic generators?

- County Seat (1), City Hall (3) , Post Office (3), DNR office and research(1), Wings Over Alma (2) – web camera, Fire Dept-Ems (1)

General Information About Overall Retail

Describe the mix of retail shopping available



- Specialty shops, galleries, bakery, ice cream, local produce, locally owned?
- Gallery, bakery – emphasizes local produced
- None – just tourist retail
- Most shops are only open during the later part of the week and carry a variety of unique items that you would probably not purchase on an everyday basis

What retail goods do local residents appear to need to travel to surrounding communities for?

- Locals have to travel for regular groceries. They do not have any hardware stores. Medical.
- Groceries & clothing
- Groceries, clothing & hardware

- Groceries/food – movies, entertainment, clothing, hardware, Target Stores etc. computer items

What stores or services were missing that you would expect to find?

- Same as above except Target etc stores, one store w/Alma T-shirts, Qwik Trip likely has staples, videos
- Grocery
- Fishing equipment/bait only saw at marina.
- At least a grocery store and another gas station other than the Kwik Trip

What retail stores or services did you find that were unusual or unexpected?

- There was a jewelry shop that focused on pearls. Also an art and pottery shop.
- Financial service
- Library, auto supply, car dealer, number of bars/restaurants and shops, TDS? Harley store?
- Auto supply store, library, TDS, car dealer ford? variety of bars and restaurants, # art galleries, motorcycle store?, beauty shops, realtor



What store(s) in this community would you travel a distance of 30 miles to patronize?

- Bakery, some specialty restaurants, jewelry and Mississippi Pearls, museums
- The bakery! Mississippi River Pearls, The Commercial-Hot flash “open” sign made of lamp shades, The Coffee Ground – no fresh muffins – good Mexican coffee. Need fresh bakery items
- Pearls of the Mississippi (Jewelry), Commercial (art gallery)
- The bakery
- We did not get a chance to shop the bakery. The Coffee shop was unique and that is the only place I made a purchase.

Rate and comment on the overall condition of the retail sector

Average Team Score: (4 ratings) 6.75

- The whole retail is tourist based so economy is seasonal

**Other Retail Shopping Areas
(e.g. Malls, Big Box stores, etc.):**

If applicable, explore other retail shopping areas outside of the downtown business district and visit as many businesses as possible.

- All of the shops we visited we found the people to be very friendly “accommodating”
- I’m just not into antiques and unusual items

Local Industries

What are the major industrial sectors in the community?

- Seem to be government & tourism, some river based industry
- Power Plan, BNSF Railroad, river related businesses, tourism business, County govt. offices, law enforcement, public school, core of engineers
- Dairyland – generate elec.
- Generator of elec., government jobs

Who do you think are the major employers in the community?

- Most people are employed at the power plant. The school is probably a larger employer
- Dairyland & Buffalo county office
- Dairyland power, Railroad-Corp of engineer, barge station, school district, county seat, sheriff dept, village govt. Tourism
- Government and tourism

What are the major types of manufacturing in the community?

- None – some furniture
- Not sure
- Didn't see any
- Didn't see anything but Dairyland

What are the major types of primary industry in the community?

- farms surrounding the area
- fishing and agriculture, tourism
- fishing and recreation
- fishing, Government services, forestry, ??? power plant – energy production

Is the community noticeably dependent on any one type of industry?

- Tourism

Is there a well defined industrial park or improved land where industries could locate or expand?

- No indication of industrial sites – nearest large employers Ashley furniture and others in Wabasha

Are the industrial facilities well maintained?

- Yes

Would this community be an attractive location for industrial development?

- Yes – on the edges of town. Major cities close – workers
- Probably not. With bigger cities closer – industry would be attracted there
- Depends on industry, river and railroad – no switch yard, commercial fishing likely in the area. Not sure what the availability workforce is to support a new business.
- No. although there could be opportunity.

Commercial Services

What types of commercial businesses serve the local community?

- TDS – lots of community services, hardware store, legal, etc.
- DSL ?
- Internet connection at Wings over Alma
- Coffee Shop and Wings over Alma had internet hookups
- What commercial services appear to be missing in the community?
- UPS/Fedex for shipped store merchandise, print shop
- Shipping drop off –UPS Fed Ex. Is there a newspaper?

Professional Services

Are banks and ATMs conveniently located? Do they have convenient hours of service?

- Not prevalent. Many people referenced Quick Trip
- Yes. ATM & bank? Not open?
- Bank downtown, ATM, bars, Kwik Trip
- 1 Bank, ATM, bank, Kwik trip

How would you rate the adequacy of financial services?

Average Team Score: (3 ratings) 7.17

- Bank in center of town, ATM's available, Accountants avail, Insurance offices
- Adequate

What other professional services are available?

- Insurance lawyer, accounting
- Yes, downtown
- Accounting, insurance, legal offices

Tourism



Does the community have a strong tourism sector? Please comment:

- Theater – Big River Radio, Altan Brown – food on the river, Canoeing the river
- Yes, train watchers would love Alma. This is a real tourism sector.
- Yes – river, arts, swans
- Yes – heavily depends on tourism

Does the community have a slogan/brand?

- Wings over Alma (3)
- Not clear unless you visit

Is the community well known for an attraction or event?

- swans migration (2) , eagles (1), art festival (2) , the river (2) – lock and dam

- Wings over Alma. It is the recognized “brand.” Flags display swans which is one of two
- Taking advantage of biggest asset Wings Over Alma – very friendly staff.

What have you seen that could be developed into a tourist attraction?

- Community theater – schedule more involvement
- Local theatre, boat rentals?, train watching

Rate and comment on the quality and appearance of existing tourist attractions.

Average Team Score: (3 ratings) 7.33

- Theater, marina,

Do you consider any of the attractions to be underdeveloped?

- Theater is underused
- Community theater
- Lock and dam access will known?

Are there any community events that could be expanded to be a tourist attraction?

- Theater

Comment on the availability and selection of overnight accommodations

- Didn't see any low cost motels – lots of inns/B&B's
- Very nice – what we saw, campgrounds – Rucks Lake, small boutique hotels B&B's
- Small hotels and campgrounds, 2 B&B's maybe more
- Mix of all kinds, adequate availability

Are there facilities to accommodate a conference and/or a large number of visitors?

- No. Not clear
- Not that we saw. Is there space at Village Hall?
- No

Is there a Visitor's Center, Chamber of Commerce office, or other facility serving the needs of tourists?



- Yes – Wings over Alma, Staff friendly, knowledgeable, lots of marketing material, sign needs to be bigger
- Wings over Alma – good staff, small signage, lots of material
- Wings over alma – modest supply, good volunteer staff
- Yes – Wings Over alma is fabulous. Staff very helpful

Rate and comment on the customer service of Chamber/Visitor Center staff:

Average Team Score: 8.5

Restaurants

Average Team Score: 7

- BBQ lunch place – slow service, not great selection. Others looked good!
- Good mix of casual, BBQ, upscale, deli, pizza
- Alma hotel – average – we ere told the only one to stay open all year – feed jail.
- Not anything to brag about

Variety/Mix of Restaurants

Average Team Score: 6.75

- Food was good. Service could have been a bit more prompt.
- All about the same

What do local residents recommend on where to stay, eat, and visit?

- Alma Hotel – lunch, locals eat (not great by my standard but friendly), BBQ place, deli/lunch place – would go here instead.
- Locals eat at Alma Hotel
- Alma House – average, Pier 4 – average



What local restaurant, specialty shop or attraction would bring you back?

- The coffee shop
- Bakery – commercial
- Swans, art festival
- Ice cream shop, Mississippi pearls, boating, swans, arts festival, scenery. The Bakery for the multigrain-carrot bread

Government/Public Services

Local Government Information

Are municipal offices conveniently located?

- Yes – City Hall center of town – located downtown
- Buffalo County Seat

How would you rate the availability and quality of information provided by the municipal government?

Community brochure/guide:

- Brochure was very useful
- Saw online only
- Not available at every business
- Government offices closed when there



Were you able to find information to make retail, commercial or industrial business investment decisions?

- Saw online and in WI MRPC literature on the Great River Road

Helpfulness of government employees

- Did not interact with anyone – Sat.

Public Infrastructure

Public Transportation: Average Team Score: (2 submitted rating) 2



Sidewalks: Average Team Score: 6

- Good on Main St., not everywhere
- Uneven – handicapped accessibility is minimal
- Uneven – not on both sides of the streets
- Side walks were clear and clean, some businesses had curb appeal

Streets: Average Team Score: 7.67

- Amenities on main St – benches, lighting, signage
- Well maintained
- Most well maintained, clean

Landscaping, Street Trees: Average Team Score: 6.75

- Nice accommodations, mixing flowers, benches at convenient locations. Need to work on area behind buildings on river side.
- Downtown-few trees
- Not a lot of trees, some pretty landscape, some bad

stuff- weeks and unkempt

Public Restrooms: Average Team Score: 6

- Didn't see any
- Porta potty by riverfloat, stores –must have them
- Porta Potty and restrooms in businesses, small but clean



Street Signage: Average Team Score: 7.75

- Mostly found where we wanted to go
- Well marked

Pay phones, drinking fountains, benches, public Internet access points, other misc: Average Team Score: 8

- Plenty of benches, café with internet
- Public Internet was in local businesses. No payphones seen. Would check Kwik Trip



- No pay phone, drinking fountains and benches downtown, public Internet – Wings over alma
- Everything but payphones, drinking fountains and benches downtown in retail area, Internet at coffee shop and Wings over Alma

Planning

Do you see conflicting land uses in the community?

- Vehicle repair shop in retail area, make junky view
- Jail in residential; streets off Main St to river, not well kept; junky auto repair in middle of art shops.
- Space downtown between buildings overgrown trucks and cars; vehicle repair with stacked tires.



Are all land uses appropriate?

- Properties on riverside didn't look well kept –BBQ place
- Some areas on river

Did you experience traffic congestion anywhere?

- Loud downtown. Wonder about loading spots for businesses.
- Hard time taking photos from middle of street – and I tried! Lots of traffic. Motorcycles.

Are community facilities and infrastructure generally accessible for people with disabilities?

- No – all building – step entrance
- Corners not cut out
- no retail shops not accessible. New buildings – Village Hall corners no ramps carved into curbs painted white, 1 hr parking, yellow – no parking
- Historic buildings seem to be they could be difficult to access

Does the community appear to be pedestrian/bike friendly?

- We did see bikers, plenty of pedestrians.
- Walkways well marked, not a lot of room for bicycles on street-narrow
- Crosswalks ok, not bike friendly
- No. No bike trail. Not enough crosswalks.

What recreational activities or facilities seemed to be missing?

- A regular play ground with equipment for young children
- Bait shops
- Not much camping
- Movies, camping – only saw Reick’s Park which has 20 campsites, fishing and hunting.

Rate the overall suitability of the recreational facilities:

- 5.25 Senior citizens**
- 6.5 Families**
- 5.5 Singles, young adults**
- 4.75 Teens**
- 4.5 Children (12 and under)**

What does the community do for entertainment?

- River, doesn’t seem to be so kid friendly
- Calendar of events is on website, school activities are source of entertainment, pursue personal hobbies, interests ,church
- Fishing
- There is a theater (not a movie theater)

Does the community have a vibrant nightlife? Please comment:

- No / Unable to answer

Faith/Religion

Comment on the number, appearance, and selection of denominations.

- 4 churches (2)
- Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic. Surprising number of churches. Lutheran church seems to be newest.
- Lots of churches.
- Good selection

Religious buildings and denominations represented in this community.

Average Team Score: 8.33

Culture and Heritage

Does the community hold any events (festivals)? Which events are held annually?

- Arts Festival, swan-wings over Alma
- River Radio – Ken Sandry

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

- Did not interview many residents.
- One teenager talked about lack of things to do, things of interest that would bond a young person to the community.

Does the community have historical buildings or places? Are they well maintained?

- Yes – plenty
- County Teachers Training School is restored and serves as their museum. Excellent. Operated by the local Historical society. Heritage Hall is on Main street and is open on weekend. Looks like they are just getting started. Great location and program. Downtown is historical, lovely overall. The fishing barge is convenient – close to village – what are the hours?
- Museum – well kept and staffed
- Museum and Heritage hall. Both well maintained. Lots of history.
- Most building seems to be of historical nature and have been refurbished.

Role Playing

Would you consider this community as a suitable location for a young family?

- Depends on the family interest. Appears to be a safe, stable community that would be a positive environment for raising a family. How open minded is the community to new ideas?

Would you consider locating your retail or service business here?

- Would want to get data on traffic count, health of existing businesses, indicators for type of business. Would a quilt shop be welcome? Fabric supplies, etc.

Would you consider locating a manufacturing business here?

- What is the present jobless rate? What assists are avail. From city government? TIF? Is land avail or space to rent? Answer = maybe.

Would you consider this a suitable location for a retired person?

- Yes. Social network present. County Services avail. Health Services – close to Winona, Rochester, Eau Clair, Twin cities, La Crosse.

Would you consider this a suitable location for a young adult?

- Depends on their interests.
- If they could find a job (Mayo clinic, Wabasha?, power plant). Schools seem good but not so easy for kids.

Would you consider visiting this community as a tourist?

- Yes and have

Information from Community Residents

Quality of information & assistance provided by residents employees of businesses.

Were community residents knowledgeable about their community?

- Yes-most people directed us to the chamber

Did they refer you to someone else who would help?

- Yes – coffee shop referred me to Alma Townhouse for my Quilt group

In general, did residents you spoke with have a positive or negative attitude toward their community? Why? Did you sense community pride?

- Very positive, care for properties reflects community pride

Did residents identify a particular issue (e.g. safety) to be of major concern?

- The economy

Overall, how would you rate the quality of information from community residents and business employees? Average Team Score: 8

Using Your Senses

What did the community taste like?

- The ice cream was very good
- Bakery bread
- The bakery, Wings over Alma, Coffee Ground, Ice Cream/Art Shop

What did the community smell like?

- Flowers, coffee, Bakery
- River Smells – not unpleasant

What sounds did you hear?

- Trains (2) , motorcycles (2), motorcycles roaring (1)

How would describe the overall environmental health of the community?

- Some litter in open spaces
- Good – wasn't smelly. Clean, wasn't constant noise.

Did you experience anything that had a strongly negative or positive impact on the way the community felt to you?

- Smiling faces – helpful
- Weeds, clutter by river front. Gravel roadway river side. Steep side streets are quaint – how about winter?

Do you think your impression would be different if your visit occurred during evening hours?

- Yes. Art shops would be closed. I would love a riverside restaurant and coffee shop.
- Probably because a lot would be closed.



Wrap-Up

Was your perception prior to the visit accurate? In what ways was the community different from what you expected?

- I have been to Alma before and love it. It is better than 2 years ago.
- No – a lot more than just a river town.

Did the information you collected prior to the visit accurately reflect what you observed/experienced?

- I reviewed the website which is nice but could be stronger. It matches photos, more than I anticipated.

What is the most outstanding feature of this community?

- Get past the power plant then see the lovely old brick buildings, mix of art galleries. I really get excited by the coffee shop – then the rest of the village.
- The friendly people.

What will you remember most about this community six months from now?

- Beautiful arts community
- The panoramic views, the bakery, river front potential, pearl shop
- People
- Scenery and shopping

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

- Develop historical society, clean up the village, add flowers, etc., use the river resource, engage our tourism businesses
- Ferrysville needs to find its history and preserve it.
- Our village needs to find its heritage and work together more

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

- Yes
- Try and find a way to work together better
- Yes – for sure. We could be capitalizing more on river

Describe one idea that you will borrow for use in your own business/community and describe how you will start to implement it within the next 72 hours!

- 3. Finding ways for community to work together and this will take longer than 72
- Visual attributes are important to great visitors, invite them to stop, stay.
- Inventory assets and focus on what to promote and develop. Spread the revitalization message.

List five positive things you observed about this community.

(note responses were grouped into categories)

1. **LOCATION** Scenery, Access to river, marina/beach, lots of tourist recreation
2. **FRIENDLY PEOPLE AND ARTS COMMUNITY** friendly people shops and art, strong arts community, Great customer service,
3. **DIVERSE BUSINESS MIX** coffee shop-bakery, choice of restaurants, mix of shops, Shopping, strong link between downtown and river, good mix of service based businesses and tourism
4. **BENEFITS OF A SMALL TOWN** clean, small – yet busy, planned streetscape, Village Hall, Fire, EMS combined, affordable
5. **GOOD TOURISM PROMOTION** signage, Buena Vista Park-Wings Over Alma

What are three potential opportunities available to the community?

1. **BUILD ON TOURISM POTENTIAL FOR TARGET GROUPS** tourism promotion, Expand destination targets opportunities to increase overnight stays capitalize on retired/ older adult pop.
2. **PLAN EVENTS AND RECRUIT BUSINESSES THAT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR EXISTING RESOURCES** River side restaurant, theater-more events Develop more cultural activities at the theater, Golf course close by and marina,
3. **IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR EXISTING RESIDENTS** clean up some parts of Main Street, more resident recreation small parks closer to residents

What are the five biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?

1. **GROWING A YEAR ROUND ECONOMY** Finding more ways to help economy all year, Visitors decline in winter months,
2. **GEOGRAPHIC LIMITATIONS** not close to larger cities/jobs, landlocked, limited area for downtown expansion,
3. **CONFLICT OF USES ON MAIN STREET** conflicts on Main Street w/traffic and tourism
4. **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ISSUES-** Where will new workforce come from? Aging population
5. **RESOURCES** Ability to market features and attractions,