

Community Visited: Horicon, Wisconsin

Dates of Visits: October 9, 2008 and October 13, 2008

Visit Completed by Seymour, Wisconsin

First Impressions:

A Program for Community Assessment & Improvement



This program was first developed by Andrew Lewis and James Schneider in 1991. It was revised in 2002 by Andrew Lewis with further revisions in 2007. This guide booklet format was developed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Rural Development Division, Ontario, Canada, in 2004. Questions about the program should be directed to:

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First Impressions: A Program for Community Assessment & Improvement Final Report

Community You Visited: Horicon, Wisconsin

Visitation Team Profile:

First Team:

Name 1: Harold Pingel
Age: Gender: M Occupation: Retired mayor of Seymour

Name 2: Kenneth Rottier
Age: 64 Gender: M Occupation: Current mayor of Seymour/retired attorney

Name 3: William Loasching
Age: Gender: M Occupation: Retired Superintendent of Seymour Community Schools

Name4: Colleen Sutherland
Age: 64 Gender: F Occupation: Seymour City Council, writer, storyteller

Date of visit and time spent: October 9, 2008 – about four hours

Weather on date of visit: Pleasant sunny day in the 70s.

Second team:

Name 5: Jim McMaster
Age: 65 Gender: M Occupation: Seymour City Council, owner/Cheezy Jim's pizza

Name 6: Robert Coonen
Age: Gender: M Occupation: Owner/Coonen's service station

Name 7: Marjorie Coonen
Age: Gender: F Occupation: Owner/Coonen's service station

Name 8: Michael Keyzers
Age: Gender: M Occupation: Retired band director, Seymour Community Schools

Name 9: Tom Duffey
Age: 79 Gender: M Occupation: Retired newspaper editor, Seymour Times-Press

Name 10: Ann Duffey
Age: 78 Gender: F Occupation: Retired from Seymour Times-Press

Date of visit & time spent: Oct. 13, 2008, 2-1/2 hours *Weather on date of visit:* Sunny, 75 degrees

Prior to Your Visit

What is your impression of the community before your upcoming visit? What are you expecting to see? Please comment on what you know about this community.

The First team was aware of Horicon Marsh. One member was an avid birder who tries to get to the Horicon Marsh yearly. One member knew something about the school system.

Comments: *I was aware that this was a flyway for geese. I knew it was next to the marsh so I was looking to see what connections they would make.*

One member of the Second Team had visited the city before on business. Every member of the team was aware of the Marsh connection. *We thought the geese-tourism business would result in a good, neat, thriving business district.*

For Visiting Team Coordinators

This and all ratings that follow are on a scale of 1-10, where 1 indicates "poor" and 10 indicates "excellent."

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? Please rate and comment on the community's online web materials and information. Could you find information on this community on state and regional tourism web sites?

Quality of online materials:

Average Team Score: 5

Range of Scores: 5 to 6

Observations:

Both teams found the Chamber of Commerce website useful, even excellent. Once requested, the material came quickly, within a day or two.

First team: *I did call Horicon City Hall and spoke to the Clerk's office. They didn't have an info packet and said I should call the Chamber. They didn't have a city map, but said maybe they still had a brochure that was about 2 years old. I was asked if I could hold and maybe 15 seconds later was told they did find the brochure and would mail it to me. They said if I need any more information, I should call the Chamber and it took them maybe 20 seconds to find its phone number.*

The first team's website search results: *There doesn't seem to be a Horicon city website. I did find material on the Chamber of Commerce website. The Chamber seems to be vigorously getting info out into the state and regional websites. Festivals and other events are always listed at Wisconsin Online and Travel Wisconsin sites. The library website is excellent, very informative.*

The Five Minute Impression

After taking a five-minute drive through the community without stopping, what was your first impression?

First team: The amount of traffic on Highways 33 and 28 surprised us. The highways were in need of repairs. There seemed to be a lack of zoning because industries and businesses were right next to the residential areas. There seemed to be a lot of people on the sidewalks. (But that was in the morning. Later on, there weren't as many people.) We noticed there was a farmers' market in progress. Houses were clean and neat.

The same impression I've always had each fall, geese flying south. We were impressed with the landscaping and neatness of our first approach, then discovered it was property owned by John Deere, part of the corporate headquarters. As we went through town, there were pretty parts and ugly parts, often near each other. Some streets needed work. The downtown is very short, only two blocks. A farmers' market called to me! I was surprised to see two Kwik Trips.

Neat, clean community, typical small town Wisconsin environment. Lack of a comprehensive zoning ordinance lead to some negative impressions. This was magnified by the presence of a busy state highway intersecting the community.

Second team: It was an older community and an older downtown. There were no fast food places, not a lot of new housing. Main Street seemed deserted. There was heavy truck traffic through the downtown. The mall seems to be mostly empty. The houses were well maintained, but there was not much upscale housing. There were many apartments and/or condos. Few homes were for sale. John Deere is the biggest employer and their buildings are everywhere.

Community Entrances

Approach the community from the major entrances. Rate and comment on each entrance.

ENTRANCE #1 Highway E

Average Team Score: 6.5

Range of Scores: 3 to 9

Observations: When we came into the city this way, at first we thought this was a golf course or a park. It was very impressive.

First team: *Very neat and well maintained but it was John Deere property. The water tower was clear. The array on the water tower means that there is some city income from cell phones.*

Second team: *We're jealous of all the industry in their industrial park. John Deere is prominent here as well as in town.*



ENTRANCE #2 Highway 33 West

Average Team Score: 6
Range of Scores: 3 to 8

Observations: At every entrance, there was the same brightly colored sign. Horicon has identified with the Marsh and uses it on all civic buildings and every entrance.

First team *Sign has crisp colors, well done.
Not a good location for signage.*

ENTRANCE #3 Highway 33 East

Average Team Score: 6
Range of Scores: 4 to 8

Observations: We didn't immediately find the sign at this entrance.

First team: *Good signage but the city sign was hidden by trees. Traffic heavy.*

Second team: *Sign is missing some of the club emblems. Trees are getting in the way of the sign.*

ENTRANCE #4 Highway 28 E

Average Team Score: 5

Range of Scores: 2 to 8

Observations: Same signage on a lovely road.

First team: *All entrances suffer after seeing the John Deere entrance.*

Second team: *Pretty road but the welcome sign was partially hidden by brush.*

OTHER ENTRANCES
(airports, bike trails, boat
landings, train stations,
snowmobile trails):

Observations: Neither of the teams went on the biking/hiking/snowmobile trails and there is no airport. There were commuter trains and boat landings. We were pleased to see “Kommuter” Cars being worked on. There seemed to be a lot of train activity.



Second team: *We were impressed by all the trains, some in service, and by the rail facility for the re-hab of train cars and equipment. The rail is still active. Nature trails are extremely important. Overall entrances led to a favorable impression.*

First team: *The Blue Heron Boat Landing on the Rock River has pontoon boat and canoe rentals which give access to Horicon Marsh. The landing is beautifully landscaped.*



Housing and Residential Areas

How would you rate the overall quality, affordability, and availability of housing in the community?

Average Team Score: 6

Range of Scores: 5 to 8

Quality

Rate using a 1-10 scale (10 is best/highest)

Average ratings for each:

8	Existing/Older Homes	6	New Homes
9	Housing for Seniors (only one rated senior housing)	7	Apartments/Rental Housing
0	Vacant lots for new homes (No one observed vacant lots so no rating.)		

Observations: We noticed the many older homes.

First team: *I especially liked the older houses which were classic. Many older established country homes. Lack of major new housing development.*

Second team: *All homes were in good shape and well taken care of. There weren't too many houses for sale and not many vacant lots, nor was there much new building.*

Affordability

Is there an adequate mix of housing to suit a variety of income levels?

Observations: Generally, yes.

First team: *The quality and affordability were average or above average. The tax rate is average. Housing is affordable. They need to attract young families.*

Availability

Rate using a 1-10 scale (10 is best/highest)

Average ratings for each:

0	Existing/Older Homes	0	New Homes
7	Housing for Seniors	7	Apartments/Rental Housing
0	Vacant lots for new homes		

Observations: *There didn't seem to be much for sale in town, and there were no ads in the Horicon newspaper.*

Second team: *There seemed to be a good mix, but not a lot of new homes. There were very few For Sale signs around.*

What are the most appealing and least appealing features of the housing in this community?

Observations: *It was the consensus of both groups that houses were well maintained and that landscaping was well done. Obvious care was taken by property owners.*

First team: *Lack of appeal for younger families.*

Second group: *Most appealing was the large home on Main Street under renovation. Beautiful windows have already been installed and insulation is up. The next step is new siding. I can't help wonder what they will do to go with the neat windows. The least appealing was a gold building sitting on a side street by a Main Street building.*

Please comment on the quality and availability of residential infrastructure (e.g., roads, sidewalks, lighting, public transportation, bike trails/lanes, and green space, street trees, yards):

Observation: *Sidewalks were available on most residential streets.*

First team: *Crosswalks were well marked and taken seriously. Even on Highway 33, trucks stopped for pedestrians. There were lots of sidewalks. Sidewalks dress up a community.*

Second team: *The residential streets were pleasant but not overly neat. We're not sure if there were curbs and gutters everywhere. Not a lot of curb and gutters in the residential areas. The hills made it picturesque. The sidewalks were narrow and not in the best condition.*

Appeal Rating Category

How would you rate the overall appeal of housing to the following populations (1=Not Appealing, 10 =Very Appealing):

Average ratings for each:

6	Single young adults	7	Senior citizen
7	Young families	4	Upscale/professional
6	Middle income		

Please comment on your observations:

First team: *The group liked the marsh and the river, but thought those wouldn't be enough to move to Horicon. It's not a place for young families. No movie theatres or entertainment. The parks are nice. Would a senior citizen re-locate here? No. I would look at other towns in the area before coming here.*

Second team: *Very few \$600,000 houses in town, but nice old, old homes.*

Education, Health, Social and Emergency Services

Education

Comment on the availability and appearance of schools.

Note: *The school website does not seem to be well developed.*

Pre-school/Kindergarten/Head Start/Primary/Elementary/Middle School

Second group: *New. I liked that the [pre-school to middle school] were all together.*

High School

First group: *The high school is an older building but the windows are new and obviously care is taken to keep the facility attractive. Good rural school district. Generally favorable impression of the school sites. A great community asset.*

Second group:

The high school was well located off a main highway. It didn't look new.

There didn't seem to be a lot of student cars. There was lots of space in the lot, but some of those were likely teachers.

The buildings were decent, but we couldn't find the football field. There were a couple of softball fields.

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

First group: *Residents had a favorable opinion on their schools.*

Second group: *Residents we talked to like the school district, and think it is a good place to raise kids. Older residents are proud of school quality. John Deere gives very little support in the community gives nothing to schools or parks.*

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

Average Team Score: 7

Range of Scores: 5 to 8

Observations:

First group: *Good availability. A good school system. School buildings are well kept up and an asset to the community. Enrollments are down.*

Health Care Services

Comment on the availability and apparent quality of healthcare facilities.

Hospitals: None

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

First team: *There's a satellite clinic. The nearest hospital would be Beaver Dam. There's a dentist office building with three dentists.*

Second team: *There are five or six dentists and one doctor. The dentists are supported by John Deere because they have a dental plan.*

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

None observed.

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

First group: *There's a chiropractor, and EMTs with the volunteer fire department.*

Overall, how would you rate the adequacy of health care services for a community of this size?

Average Team Score: 5

Range of Scores: 1 to 7

Social Services

What social services (e.g., day care, senior center, counseling, etc.) are available in the community?

First team: *I noticed some brochures at the library for various services, but some seem to be in other communities nearby. There's a Bethesda Thrift Shop.*

Second team: *There's a good senior center in city hall and a meals on wheels.*

The senior center is active, with a band playing for lunch on Columbus Day. There's a senior residence place behind the bowling alley.

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

Average Team Score: 6
Range of Scores: 4 to 8

Civic

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

First team: *There are plenty listed on the websites; each of them seems active in projects. The Chamber of Commerce organizes the Farmers' Market. One of the vendors was proud of his 19 pound kohlrabi. I bought an apple and some green peppers. I wish we could get a market like that going in our city.*



Second team: *There are six or more service organizations.*

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

Average Team Score: 7

Range of Scores: 5 to 9

Please comment:

First team: *I was impressed at the number of organizations and the projects they seem to be involved in, from festivals to the farmers' market.*

Emergency Services

Overall, how would you rate the police, fire, ambulance, and emergency medical service facilities? How do local residents feel about these services?

Comment: Neither team sounded out local residents about the services.

First team: *All services are available and adequate for the size of the community.*

Second team: *They're remodeling fire department building at this time. The police, fire, ambulance, and emergency service facilities are well-located together close to Main Street.*



Average Team Score: 7

Range of Scores: 6 to 8

Local Economy

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

Both teams were impressed with the amount of industry in Horicon. The industrial park was busy; there is one huge industry. On the other hand, the downtown and the mall are suffering the usual small town woes. The lack of a grocery store was on everyone's mind.

First team: *The health of the local economy was positive. John Deere, plus the industrial park, was almost full; John Deere and other businesses create a lot of jobs. Three new sites were under construction.*

Second team: *The local economy is dominated by John Deere but there are many other firms providing products to Deere. Lots of machine shops, pallet factory, and frames for tractors, all tied to John Deere.*

Downtown

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

First team: *It's on Highway 33, so you just follow the highway.*

Second team: *Highway 33 from the west has a number of turns but it gets to downtown.*

Rate and comment on the overall appearance of the downtown (buildings, displays, signage, streetscape).

Average Team Score: 4

Range of Scores: 1 to 9

Second team: *We were shocked at the decrepit, old, vacant buildings downtown, particularly because of the industry. Very busy and noisy, lots of trucks. The overall appearance of the downtown was run down. There were boarded up or dirty windows. I would recommend that they put a background in each of those windows, wash the windows and keep them clean. The backdrops could have some scenes from Horicon. A service group in the area could be responsible for sets of windows. The ice cream shop should list the hours, not just the open or closed sign.*

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 4

Range of Scores: 1 to 7

First team: *Horicon suffers like every other small town with a lack of retail offerings.*

There is no grocery store. Everyone we talked to brought it up. It was on everybody's mind.

You can't buy a pair of socks there. There was a jewelry store.

There was a health food store that has been there for thirty years. Shopping retail services are minimal leading to residents shopping elsewhere.

Rate and comment on the customer service you received in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 8
Range of Scores: 5 to 10

First team: *Every clerk was friendly, helpful, and steered me to another store when I asked for something they didn't have. The Old Time Food Store owner chatted about the bird paintings around the store, told me his wife did raptor rescues and took me down to the basement to look at her collection of stuffed birds, which she takes to schools. He said the store has been located there for thirty years.*

Second team: *Mother's Day was clean and neat, but we needed a smile when they took our order. Should have thanked us and asked us to come again. The train shop was great. The man was warm, friendly, asked us to come again and gave us his card and sold us a book at half price. The owner of the Old Time Food Store was friendly and visited with us. However, the book merchandise looked shopworn.*



Rate and comment on the signage in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 6
Range of Scores: 6 to 6

First team: *Good to very good. Good for what was available.*

Second team: *There are notices on every door: Are you registered to vote?*

Rate and comment on the window displays in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 4
Range of Scores: 1 to 5

First team: *Displays weren't much. Some attempts were made to paint storefront windows on empty buildings.*

Second team: *Windows should be washed. Empty windows could be made attractive with seasonal displays about the area.*

Rate and comment on the variety and quality of merchandise in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 2.3

Range of Scores: 1 to 5

Comment on the mix of facilities and services in the downtown (housing, professional services, retail, recreation, accommodation and food, industry, parks, etc.).

First team: *In the stores I went to, some effort was made, but there weren't that many stores. The farmers' market was a plus!*

Second team: *Not much shopping, a lot of service stores. A lot of traffic on 33 but very little of it stopped in Horicon.*

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

Average Team Score: 7

Range of Scores: 5 to 10

First team: *Parking is no problem, but then there is no business.*

Second team: *Nice parking lots next to city hall, and parking on the streets.*

Rate and comment on the quality (appearance, adequacy, etc.) of lighting in the downtown.

Average Team Score: 4.75

Range of Scores: 4 to 5

First team: *Since we weren't there at night, it was hard to say but the lights are similar to those we had in Seymour and we replaced them.*

Does the downtown play a role in tourism? Is there potential for the downtown to play a greater role?

First team: *There were banners about an arts celebration and every public building had the "city marsh" logo. The Blue Heron Landing is a plus. Play to your assets.*

Second team: *There were wire baskets around with Chamber of Commerce information. A lot of it was about Dodge County. A nice list of events going on. First you would have to get rid of the traffic on 33. We would expect some attractive specialty shops as well as clean, neat service stores.*



Blue Heron Landing

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

First team: *There might have been apartments over the store fronts. It was difficult to tell. The door to one upstairs entry had broken glass. To an outsider, it looked like a break in....and crime. Zoning is very haphazard, probably the result of years of development.*

Second team: *Lots of upstairs apartments that looked empty.*

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

Second team: *No, too much traffic.*

Were there any government or nonprofit organization activities that are serving as traffic generators for the downtown (city hall, post office, YMCA)?

First team: *I visited the library, which is newly painted and carpeted. The librarian steered me to the computers to use the internet. There were interesting programs being planned, including a Halloween visit by a group that explores paranormal events. The library is an asset to the city. No public YMCA available.*

Second team: *City hall, library, post office, bank. There's only one bank locally owned.*

General Information about Overall Retail

Describe the mix of retail shopping available (malls, specialty shops, strip malls, big box stores).

First team: *There is a mall, but there are a lot of empty spaces and it's outside of the downtown. Not available. Difficult to attract retail.*

Second team: *One mall with no grocery store. There's a meat market off the downtown.*

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

First team: *Groceries, clothing, almost everything. Young families will want retail.*

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

Both teams: *A grocery store.*

Second team: *A camera shop, a quilt shop. (Guess what we like to do!)*

Medical, grocery, clothing. Their only grocery store closed one year ago.

What retail stores or services did you find that were unusual or unexpected for a town of this size?

First team: *The Old Time Food Store, an ice cream shop, and two Kwik Trips.*

Second team: *The train shop. There apparently were five dentists and only one doctor.*

The old meat market. Very good.

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

First team: *None I can think of unless it's Leroy's Meats (outside of the downtown).*

Horicon Marsh drew me there for years but I had never been downtown. That tells you something. Most retail businesses are located within 30 miles – Juneau, Mayville and Beaver Dam appear to be the major source of retail.

Second team: *Ginger's Hide-away.*

Rate and comment on the overall condition of the retail sector

Average Team Score: 3

Range of Scores: 1 to 4

First team: *You need to travel outside the city for everything.*

Second team: *Old outdated city for retail.*

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

Retail Area #1

Type (Shopping mall etc.): Marshland Mall Shopping Mall

Location: East of town

Rate and comment on the overall appearance.

Average Team Score: 3.3

Range of Scores: 2 to 5

Comment: *The mall was near the edge of the city and seemed to be losing ground. There were vacant places. Nearby there was a Dodge dealership with very few cars parked there. If they don't get a grocery store in there, the mall won't succeed.*

First team: *Mexican and Chinese restaurants, a pharmacy, and Hardware Hank, but they need a grocery store.*

Second team: *Closed down grocery store.*

Rate and comment on the variety of shopping.

Average Team Score: 3.3

Range of Scores: 2 to 5

Second team: *Not much.*

Rate and comment on the variety and quality of merchandise.

Not visited.

Local Industries

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

Both teams: *John Deere*

What are the major types of manufacturing in the community?

Both teams: *Items related to John Deere, farm machinery and lawnmower.*

What are the major types of primary industry in the community (e.g. agriculture, mining, forestry or fishing)?

First team: *Manufacturing*

Second team: *Marsh tourism and hunting.*

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

First team: *Yes, but it's running out of room.*

Are the industrial facilities well maintained? Both teams: *Yes, very well.*

Would this community be an attractive location for industrial development? Why or why not?

First team: *Yes but they will need to add more industrial land. The community must be complimented on attracting and maintaining quality industry.*

Second team: *Yes, they have a railroad.*

Commercial Services

What types of commercial businesses serve the local community (high-speed internet provider, print shops, etc.)?

First team: *Not much in town, one computer shop. Minimal, but adequate.*

What commercial services appear to be missing in the community?

Second team: *Many. Horicon seems to suffer being only 4 to 7 miles from other larger communities that can provide all the necessary services.*

Professional Services

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

First Team: *My debit card didn't work at the bank's ATM but it did at the Kwik Trip.*

Second Team: *One bank in Horicon, with convenient hours. Right downtown, right in the middle of it.*

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

Average Team Score: 5

Range of Scores: 2 to 9

Please Comment:

First team: *Only one bank. Horicon Bank has eleven locations. Outstanding banking service, truly a community asset.*

What other professional services are available (accounting, insurance, legal, etc.)? Are there any apparent gaps?

First team: *At least two insurance agents and one attorney. All are adequate and available.*

Second team: *Dentist, tax service, medical, automotive, farm equipments, gas stations.*

Tourism

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

First team: *Horicon Marsh provides a strong base for tourism. Campgrounds, water park, golf course which is owned by the city. Give the city credit for that. May bird festival.*

Second team: *An active DNR program. Horicon Marsh. The International Education Center will open in November.*

Does the community have a slogan/brand?

Both teams: *City on the Marsh.*

Second team: *High school sports team: Marshmen.*

Is the community well known for an attraction or event?

First team: *Horicon Marsh.*

Second team: *Geese flying in. Bird marsh. May Bird Festival.*

What have you seen that could be developed into a tourist attraction (natural or man-made)?

First team: *Their water park could be better advertised. Few stores capitalizing on Horicon Marsh, although they do have events that have to do with the Marsh.*

Second team: *With the new building (Education Center), visitors will be introduced to a better understanding of the marsh and what they are seeing. Rock River Tour. Enhanced boat ramps and marina.*

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

Average Team Score: 7

Range of Scores: 2 to 10

First team: Marsh is excellent.

Do you consider any of the attractions to be underdeveloped? Please comment.

First team: *The river could be better developed. They seem to have a handle on tourism.*

Second team: *The big park needs more playground equipment and better parking. Restroom facilities were not central.*

Are there any community events that could be expanded/developed to be a tourist attraction? Please specify: *There seem to be enough community events for a city that size.*

Comment on the availability and selection of overnight accommodations in the community (hotels, motels, campgrounds, B&Bs).

First team: *Good choices: motel, campgrounds and a B&B.*

Second team: *We saw only one rather modest motel.*

Is there a Visitor's Center, Chamber of Commerce office, or other facility serving the needs of tourists? Please comment on staff, facilities, signage, marketing material, maps, etc.

First team: *The Chamber of Commerce office was closed for lunch when we were there. There were racks with brochures around town. Adequate for this size town.*

Second team: *The Chamber of Commerce is in an old bar. It still has the back bar in it. Small and old.*

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

Average Team Score: 5
Range of Scores: 2 to 9

Comment: *They provided extra assistance in sending materials promptly.*

Restaurants

Comment and rate the quality of restaurants:

Quality

Average Team Score: 8
Range of Scores: 7 to 9

Comments:

First team: *Anyone we asked told us to go to Mother's Day restaurant, and they were right. There were other places, like the Hideaway, but it was closed while we were there as was the ice cream parlor.*

Second team: *Very good, but the waitress should smile more.*

Variety/Mix of Restaurants

Average Team Score: 6
Range of Scores: 6

Comments: *None of us saw any of the other restaurants. We wondered why there weren't any fast food restaurants.*

What local restaurant, specialty shop or attraction would bring you back to this community in the near future?

First team: *Leroy's meat market, the Horicon Marsh and the Blue Heron Boat Landing. I would like to rent a canoe and go into the marsh.*

Second team: *We would like to visit the library and the museum, which were both closed. Ginger's Hide-away. (It was closed but the team was able to go in and take a look at it.)*

Government/Public Services

Local Government Information

Are municipal offices conveniently located? Yes.

Please comment:

First team: *In the downtown area.*

Second team: *Everything was right in the middle of town.*

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

Note: *City clerk's office referred us to the Chamber of Commerce.*

Community brochure/guide:

Average Team Score: 7.7

Range of Scores: 7 to 8

First team: *The community brochures and guides are well done.*

Business Directory:

Average Team Score: 6

Range of Scores: 4 to 8

First team: *The Chamber of Commerce website was the only directory I saw, but that was excellent.*

Community Profile (including business and industrial sites):

Average Team Score: 5.5

Range of Scores: 5 to 6

First team: *The community profile doesn't say much about John Deere. We would like to see smaller employers that could be depended on.*

If applicable, were you able to find adequate information to make informed retail, commercial and/or industrial business investment decisions? (Answer only if you played the role of a potential business investor).

How would you rate the helpfulness of government employees?

Average Team Score: 7.5

Range of Scores: 5 to 10

First team: *I was impressed with Lisa, the assistant clerk.*

Second team: *The clerk's office was very unprofessional. We didn't find a point person for adequate information to make investments. I found out that the people of Horicon have to contract for their own garbage pickups, at \$68 a quarter. Recycling and grass clippings you do yourself.*

Public Infrastructure

Comment on and rate each of the following for quality accessibility, or availability where relevant.

Public Transportation:

Average Team Score: 2

Range of Scores: 2

Comment: *There is no public transportation.*

Sidewalks:

Average Team Score: 6

Range of Scores: 3 to 9

First team: *Good condition.*

Second team: *The sidewalks are small, narrow, and old.*

Streets:

Average Team Score: 4

Range of Scores: 3 to 5

Comment:

First team: *33 needs work.*

Second team: *Rough, all that traffic on 33, trucks, etc., are hard on a street.*

Landscaping, Street Trees:

Average Team Score: 6

Range of Scores: 3 to 9

Comment:

First team: *I appreciated the many flowers planted on private property.*

Second team: *Streets looked nice and inviting. We didn't notice any landscaping. Main Street seemed very tired. It's a Tree City.*

Public Restrooms:

Average Team Score: 4.5

Range of Scores: 3 to 6

Comment:

Second team: *Present at City hall, library, and parks.*

Street Signage:

Average Team Score: 8.3

Range of Scores: 8 to 9

Comment:

First team: *I liked the crosswalk signs which seemed effective. Traffic actually stopped for pedestrians.*

Second team: *Very well done. Very good signs around town, letting you know where things and places are at.*



Pay phones, drinking fountains, benches, public Internet access points, other misc:

Average Team Score: 6.5

Range of Scores: 6 to 7

Comment: *Pay phones seem to be a thing of the past.*

First team: *Benches on the Rock River. There was wireless internet access at the library. The librarian was very pleasant.*

Second team: *There were no benches on Main Street. No drinking fountains.*

Planning

Do you see conflicting land uses in the community? Please comment:

First team: *Zoning seems confusing. It would be nice to see some transitional zones. Highway 33 is commercial. Some houses were turned into businesses. This was especially pronounced along the major highway transecting the community.*

Second team: *No small town atmosphere. Confused zoning, residential next to industry. Spot zoning.*

Are all land uses appropriate (commercial, residential, green space etc.)? Specify where land uses are not appropriate:

Second team. *The large home being renovated was next to a road. It would look better in a green space environment. Waterways and railroad in town.*

Did you experience traffic congestion anywhere? If yes, location:

Comment: Yes, Highway 33.

First team: *We heard that the DOT keeps pushing back reconstruction of H. 33. Watching Walmart trucks drive through adds insult to injury. Downtown area highway 33 traffic needs to be addressed.*

Second team: *Lake Street heading west.*

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

First team: *Newer buildings were fine: post office, city hall, library, etc. Older stores often require a step up.*

Does the community appear to be pedestrian/bike friendly?

First team: *Yes, except for Highway 33.*

Second team: *Cars stopped for pedestrians.*

Highway 33 is not a bike street and the town is hilly.

Recreation, Faith, Culture and Heritage

Recreation

Facilities

Comment on the availability & appearance of each of the following types of recreational facilities. Rate each type of facility.

Parks:

Average Team Score: 8.5

Range of Scores: 8 to 10

Comment: *Horicon has several parks around town. School was in session while we were there, so there wasn't much use except for a few mothers pushing strollers.*

Second team: *Nice, big parks. Lack of parking.*

Public recreation facilities:

Average Team Score: 8

Range of Scores: 7 to 9

Comment:

Second team: *Boat landings had easy in, easy out with a car. The boat landings looked small.*

Based on your impression, what do people in this community appear to do for recreation/fun?

First team: *Swim, bike, tennis (mostly related to schools), nature trails. Nature. The Marsh, river and parks.*

Second Team: *Baseball, boating.*

What recreational facility (private or public) in this community surprised you?

First team: *The aquatic center. The Marsh is very impressive. Outdoor water park is outstanding.*

Second team: *We were surprised that the aquatic center was located separately from the school.*

What recreational activities or facilities seemed to be missing?

First team: *Indoor recreation.*

Second team: *We couldn't find a football field with enough bleachers to accommodate fans.*

Rating Category

- 6 Senior citizens
- 5 Families
- 4 Singles, young adults
- 5 Teens
- 5 Children (12 and under)

Entertainment

What does the community do for entertainment?

First team: *Aqua center, one bar, or leave town.*

What entertainment opportunities do residents feel they lack?

First team: *Movie theatre.*

Does the community have a vibrant nightlife?

Comment: *No opinions.*

First team: *We weren't there at night.*

Faith/Religion

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

First team: *I counted five denominations . The churches were well kept up. The big Lutheran and Catholic churches seemed relatively new. Excellent.*

Are there any outstanding architectural or design features found on the religious buildings you visited?

First team: *Architecturally excellent. Not that I noticed, but I set the bar pretty high.*

Second team: *Lots of nice churches. Both Catholic campus and St. Stephen campus were very nice, well maintained.*

Please rate the religious buildings and denominations represented in this community.

Average Team Score: 9

Range of Scores: 7 to 10

Culture and Heritage

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

First team, from Horicon Chamber website:

May - Annual Bird Festival

June - City Wide Rummage Sale

September - Chamber of Commerce Cruise Night

Classic Car Show

Chamber of Commerce Art on the Marsh

Rock N'River Jam Festival

Weekly Farmers' Market

What events are popular with residents?

First team: *We noted the Art on the Marsh banners up and down Main Street.*

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

First team: *Add in all the Horicon Marsh events, there's a lot going on. I believe that the residents care and want more. They struggle with how to provide more for their community.*

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

First group: *There's an historical tour of buildings but it's out of date. A 'grove of maples' is long gone, and one resident didn't even know her home was on the tour. Outstanding for a community this size.*

Second group: *The Satterlee Clark House Museum with their annual Christmas Open House. Well maintained.*

General Observations

Role Playing

The following questions may be assigned to individuals.

Would you consider this community as a suitable location for a young family? Why or why not?
Maybe. School system is superior according to locals. I find that the community does not offer what young families today desire, outside of a good school system.

Would you consider locating your retail or service business here? Why or why not?

I feel that the community would welcome quality retail; however, without residential growth, I don't believe the demand exists.

Would you consider locating a manufacturing business here? Why or why not?

Yes, good labor force and a positive attitude. Very friendly manufacturing environment exists.

Would you consider this a suitable location for a retired person? Why or why not?

No. No transportation, no grocery store.

Plus walking with all those hills.

No, there are not enough basic stores or medical care.

*Quite secure and safe environment for most **local** individuals. Will not attract retirees from the outside.*

Would you consider this a suitable location for a young adult? Why or why not?

No, although there might be jobs available due to all the industry.

No, not much happening.

No, does not provide what the youth of today demand: recreation, entertainment and shopping are not available.

Would you consider visiting this community as a tourist? Why or why not?

Yes, we'd come to see the geese, library and museum.

Yes, the Marsh is delightful.

Information from Community Residents

Were community residents knowledgeable about their community?

We visited the Press, and they were very responsive regarding the community. They lamented that John Deere did not contribute in any way to the community (except for taxes) and no doubt other industries follow their lead. That's unfortunate. They were supportive and pleasant, but overemphasized negatives. Residents were knowledgeable, always helpful, and positive – except when talking about the truck traffic.

Did they refer you to someone else who would help?

Yes, every time.

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

Overall, there was community pride, community support, and a positive attitude.

Tom spoke with retired Deere employees who were happy where they were but concerned about the heavy truck traffic on H. 33.

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

Viability of the downtown and schools.

The lack of a grocery store.

Poor retail.

Overall, how would you rate the quality of information from community residents and business employees?

Average Team Score: 8

Range of Scores: 6 to 10

Using Your Senses

What did the community taste like? Was there any specialty food item, bakery, restaurant, or candy store that you will remember?

Both teams: Good food, Mother's Day restaurant.

First team: The meat shop was great. A long list of meats, sausages and so on, and they had cheese. It was exceptional.

What did the community smell like? Was there any offensive industrial, agricultural, or sewage smells? What about pleasant odors (flowers, food, etc.)?

The traffic smells were not pleasant. You don't expect so many exhaust fumes in a small town.

What sounds did you hear? Please comment on the level of noise in the community.

Traffic noise on Main Street. Geese in the Horicon Marsh.

How would describe the overall environmental health of the community (air quality, litter, noise pollution etc.)?

Noise and traffic pollution - otherwise, excellent.

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

There were smiling faces and positive attitudes from the citizens overall.

I liked the many service organizations that are working to improve things.

Lack of a grocery store and Highway 33 crowding.

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

Probably. Difficult to say.

Wrap-Up

The following questions are to be answered by all team members:

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

Overall, the group expected a small town with all its problems. Ken did not expect the highways would be so busy, and Harold thought it would be a more vibrant community. Both teams were surprised at the lack of a grocery store. Tom and Ann thought the city has not been able to take full advantage of its assets. Bill said the community had a stronger industrial base than he first thought and that the lack of retail and developed housing was surprising.

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

Except for the architectural tour, yes.

What is the most outstanding feature of this community?

Horicon Marsh and its natural beauty.

John Deere and the industry.

List five positive things you observed about this community.

- 1 *The marsh*
- 2 *The industrial base*
- 3 *Friendly attitudes of residents*
- 4 *Rock River*
- 5 *Parks*

What are three potential opportunities available to the community?

- 1 *The marsh*
- 2 *Additional industrial parkland*
- 3 *Parks, which could be developed even more.*

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

- 1 *Downtown decay and traffic. They're caught in the whole changing of downtown America.*
- 2 *Mentality of the people who have to admit they are a suburb and no longer an agrarian small town. Don't live in the past! Move forward.*
- 3 *Lack of community support from John Deere*
- 4 *Lack of grocery and variety stores*
- 5 *Absentee management*

What will you remember most about this community six months from now (positive or negative)?

The gals at the newspaper office and our coffee visit with elderly gentlemen at the restaurant, community pride, beauty of the marsh, the meat market. The Marsh and the friendly people.

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

Our downtown is in relatively better shape. Industry does not necessarily generate lower taxes. Horicon has many of the same challenges that are faced by Seymour.

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

Yes. We need better entry signage. We need to find ways to revitalize our own downtown.

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!

I implemented a window display of 'historical ghosts' to bring people into the downtown businesses over Halloween.

We should encourage people to be active in our community. We need some kind of brochure and to get the Chamber of Commerce moving.

Comments from the coordinator:

I felt that between Seymour and Horicon, combining our assets would create one heck of a city. Horicon has industry and a great tourism industry based on the water features in the Rock River and the Horicon Marsh, neither of which Seymour has. Seymour has a good grocery store, four banks, fast food, two retail stores that sell clothing, shoes, and so on. Horicon's signage is good, Seymour's is lacking. Seymour has few service organizations, Horicon has six. Our downtown is on the verge of being revitalized with some new businesses, Horicon's seems to be dying. Our lapses and plusses seem to complement each other.

First Impressions Community Exchange Photo Log

Photo #	Description	Location (page no.)
1 & 2	Horicon Sign	Cover & 4
3.	Trains	5
4.	Boat landing	5
5	Signs	23
6	Sign – Farmers’ Market	10
6.	Farmer with giant kohlrabi	10
7.	Public Safety Building	11
8.	Birds at Old Time Food Store	13
9.	Blue Heron Landing	15
10.	Blue Heron Flowers	31

