

**First**  
**IMPRESSIONS**  
of

Edgerton, Wisconsin  
November 6, 1992

**A program for community improvement**

---

Sponsored by University of Wisconsin-Extension, Rock County  
Joseph E. Moskal, UWEX Community Development Agent

in cooperation with  
Clinton, Wisconsin

Developed by: Andy Lewis  
Grant County UW-Extension Resource Agent  
James L. Schneider  
Exec. Dir. Grant County Economic Dev. Corp.

## **FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

Each and every day, year after year, people travel to Edgerton for the first time. These first time visitors come for different reasons--business, pleasure, traffic detours, etc. Each develops a "first impression" of the community, **based** on what they experience. This impression, be it good or bad or neutral, is what the visitors take home. These perceptions, accurate or not, then define Edgerton in the mind of the visitor. Learning about these impressions can help a community become more aware of its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for community improvement.

***First Impressions*** is a community exchange program designed to help a community see itself through the eyes of "**visitors**". These visitors are outsiders who purposefully travel to a community to perform a structural community analysis over a period of a few hours. Two communities participate in the exchange, each visiting the other and then preparing a report on positive or negative reactions--a first impression.

**A** team of **4** volunteers from the Village of Clinton, Wisconsin, (Rock County) made a ***First Impressions*** visit to Edgerton, Wisconsin on Friday, November 6, 1992. Two men and **two** women comprised the visitation team. What follows are the impressions they recorded during their visit to Edgerton.

The data contained in this report were requested by the Downtown Renewal Association, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation and City Council. These organizations will be responsible for interpreting the data in regard to community improvement issues.

Joseph E. Moskal  
UWEX Community Development Agent  
**Rock County**  
November **23**, 1992

1. *What was my perception before visiting the community: What did I expect, etc.*

My main perceptions were of "tobacco industry" and recent job losses as described in area papers.

I had been to the schools numerous times for girls basketball & volleyball. I have seen some poor sportsmanship in the junior high basketball team & coaching. I had heard of businesses closing. I have also been to Nelson Young and know they are a great company & great people to work with. We enjoyed the Carlton several times.

Thought it would be a farm/tobacco community centered around the Threshere. Expected less activity in town due to the time of year.

I didn't have any preconceived notions, as I have never been to Edgerton; therefore, my expectations were wide open.

2 *Approaching the community, what do you notice first? (Evaluate EACH entrance)*

Positive:

All of the approaches were nice. North was especially attractive as you enter on a business strip.

Highway 51 N: Nice homes & new businesses. Nice Valley Bank. More attractive than 51 South.

Highway 51 S: Seems like the backdoor. Looked better going out of town this way.

Highway F: Nice, well kept homes.

Nice looking Edgerton signs at entrances.

Highway 59: Clean, nice billboards all ends of town.

Highway 59 West: Not as modern; not as well kept up.

Highway 51: South looked more commercial.

Yards & houses in very good shape; well taken care of. Clean and neat.

Negatives:

A goofy intersection coming in on south side on 51.

Intersection by Walker's Service Station could be improved.

59 West: Road work needed; goofy intersection if you want to go towards industrial park.

Highway 59 W: Looks older but clean.

Highway 51: Corner Lord & South Main tricky corner & possible danger for out of towners.

Highway 51: Corner Lord & South Main dangerous for out of towners .

3. *As you drive around town your comments on:*

A. Appearance

1. Downtown

Busy. More heavy truck traffic than I expected. Some buildings need paint/sandblasting.

Upstairs windows need curtains or blinds. Oats Bin, Hardware store & St. Vincent : sandblast & paint. Nice looking architecture; been kept up. Good parking available.

Empty stores should never look empty. People do look up; second & third floors need cosmetic work. Slaggs Ins. building needs repairs.

Clean, well kept. Even empty buildings didn't look deserted (except craft store). Good use of old school buildings. Upper stories of most downtown buildings need refurbishing.

2. Residential

Many nice homes. Several different age groups of homes.

Some nice big beautiful homes. Nice areas: Snell Drive, SW area, Edgerton Retirement very nice.

Recycling bins--very positive. North, South & East ends--nice subdivisions.

Well kept up yards & buildings. Recycling bins (P). Very nice subdivision on north, south & east ends. West looked more rundown/older but clean.

3. Industrial park

Very nice if you happen to stumble into it!!!

Needs **signs!** Depot looks great! How is the Depot used?

Looks new. The area by Conservation Park looked more like Industrial Park.

Looks new; underdeveloped.

4. Parks

Excellent. One very large; one very well equipped with pool.

West Side: Old Race Track Park; nice, big, lots of facilities. Central Park: very nice! Lots to do, looks great, great location.

There seems to be quite a few activities for youth. Well groomed.

Nice parks; lots of activities for youth--tennis courts, swimming pool, deer.

5. Schools

Very attractively grouped.

Nice complex.

Good looking buildings & grounds. Signs very visible.

Signs for schools visible. Nice looking buildings & grounds.

6. Infrastructure (Sidewalks, streets, lighting, etc.)

Streets had many bad spots!

The old fashioned lights downtown look nice but the upstairs of the buildings detract.

Seems to be maintained regularly. Where was the handicapped parking?

Okay; but didn't see any handicapped parking.

7. Other

Use of old schools great. Tri-county Center & Senior housing.

Hospital very nice, important; adds a lot.

Good library sign: very visible.

B. Signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

Neutral impact.

Nice Edgerton signs at some entrances. (I'll have to see who Sterling North is, I guess.)

Billboard coming in on Highway 59 good size. Highway 59 & 51 signs very visible.

Good. Always could tell what highway we were on. Edgerton billboards very nice.

2. Streets

Neutral impact.

SW residential area needs roadwork; but nice looking subdivision. Looks nice without curb & sidewalks.

Two different size lettering on green street signs.

Downtown okay. Most residential; small signs, hard to read.

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

Okay.

Hospital - good signs from East & downtown. Didn't see signs on West side of town.

Could find Hospital from many directions.

Yes. Very clear from all directions.

4. Storefront signs

Couldn't see some store names from sidewalk in front of stores.

Stand in front of your stores and at eye level can you tell what kind of store it is or do you have to stand back & look around the awning?

Interesting, well kept, big enough to see; but many were hidden by awnings when walking downtown. Look at your storefronts. Would you know from sidewalk what the store is? Shoe store sign shouldn't be there.

5. Industrial park

Never saw a single sign.

Where are the signs? We found it by accident because of the watertower. Very nice roads, nicely laid out.

Tiny sign; almost invisible.

Where is it? No signs telling you how to find it. We found one tiny industrial park sign by accident. Should have larger sign to attract attention.

6. City Hall, police, etc.

Found this by accident also.

Poorly marked, unimpressive.

City Hall could have signs with (arrow). The actual sign on city is good after you find it. Found Police & Fire Dept. by accident; but most contact would be by phone.

No sign or arrow from Highway 59; blue sign very visible in front though. Police & Fire Departments: would have missed except for police cars in front of building. Most people call Police or Fire Departments though.

7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

Not many (positive).

Not overly done. I personally don't like a lot of billboards because they take away from overall view of an area.

4. *Visitor/community information (Visited by one team only)*

A. City/Village Hall

1. Is there a street map?

Yes.

Yes, nice map.

Yes.

Yes, in community brochure.

2. **Community brochure/directory**

Very nice brochures.

Yes, the Treasure Guide is very nice.

Yes, very colorful and informative. Answered my questions on how to get to wherever.

Very well done, interesting, colorful and informative.

3. **Community profile (including business and industrial opportunities).**

Yes, from City Hall.

It seems the money and space is there. You just need someone with good ideas. Men & women's clothing, linens, bedding.

Need clothing and shoe stores. Industrial opportunity looks good. Money is available for development of new businesses. Need department store (linens, bedding, etc.)

4. **Recommendations on place to stay/eat/visit.....etc.**

In brochure with map; Treasure Guide.

In brochure with city map. Festivals in Treasure Guide. Christmas Craft Show recommended by the Hobby Farm at Edgerton Middle School.

5. **Contact people & addresses listed if I want more info.**

In brochure.

6. **Complimentary Items (Postcards, bookmarks, coupons, etc.)**

None.

B. **Chamber office/visitor info center**

1. **Easy to locate (and did people refer you to it?)**

We saw the little signs by the Stop N Go. Perhaps there should be some information there. She referred us to City Hall.

Couldn't find office but did get phone number.

In City Hall. Telephone contact number in city brochure.

2. Comments on info available (Street map/brochures/community profile/etc.)

--  
We stopped at a place indicated by sign as "Tourist Information": absolutely no information there!

Good at City Hall.

See #2, page 7.

3. Recommendations on places to stay/eat/visit etc.

See #2, page 7.

4. How prepared/helpful were they.

5. Convenient hours?

- C. Info from general community (service station/motel/bars/restaurants/shop employees/etc.)

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

- a. Stopped at a cafe, asked about the railroad station; two different employees knew nothing.

Waitresses at downtown corner coffee shop not too knowledgeable regarding depot.

Stop N Go needs information for Information Center.

See page 8, A.

- b. Good service, good food.

- c. Town Edge, good service & food. Nice, pleasant atmosphere.

- d.

2. Did they refer you to someone else who could help?
  - a. Yes, City Hall.
  - b.

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

- a. Very polite.

At the Stop N Go they need some handouts.

Clerks & waitresses were friendly.

Clerks friendly, helpful: didn't hover over you (P).

- b. St. Vincent de Paul people very friendly. They are there for a good cause. Why not donate the paint. Their building needs it badly.

- c. No theaters; live or movie; negative.

4. Other comments

- a. Excellent older fellow at Tri-County Center. Knew everything about everything. Really.

The stores look nice on the inside for the most part.

Rebholz Gas & Electric needs a sign.

- b. Few empty storefronts.

Nelson Lumber had most visible sign in town.

- c. No video arcades (P).  
No theaters (live or movies) (N).

## 5. General

- A. Do residents know their community history/events/directions/etc.

The manager at Community Center was great.

Limited contact with residents because of time of day.  
Dick Schultz at City Hall had answers to all questions.

Dick Schultz. City Administrator, was very knowledgeable of town activities, businesses and needs. Waitress at corner cafe did not know if there was a Chamber of Commerce.

B. Services...variety of retail...lodging facilities...

Nice split retail; downtown & strip. Encouraging to see both surviving.

Could use clothing and/or shoe store. There are lots of unique and up-to-date businesses.

Need mens & womens clothing & shoes. Only located one motel.

Need clothing, show & department stores. Only saw one motel.

C. Are there public restrooms?

We didn't see any.

Gas stations.

In station, lots of stations and restaurants.

D. Payphones...are they working, phone books intact.

Didn't find any.

Didn't see any.

E. Industrial park...does it look active & attractive.

Yes!

Found it by accident; but nice looking.

Everything (building) looks new; needs bigger sign for more attention.

Looks like it's just starting; needs sign.

- F. What does the community TASTE like? (Specialty restaurants/bakeries/etc.)

Good food at Town Edge & corner restaurant. Jan's looks wonderful!

Food tasted homemade.

Food had homemade taste; was good.

- G. What does community SMELL like?

Smells fine.

Nothing noticeable.

Okay; nothing out of the ordinary.

- HI What SOUNDS did you hear?

More commercial traffic than I expected.

Weekday; quiet.

Very quiet; weekday.

- I. What did community FEEL like (Emotional response, i.e. cold/warm, crowded/deserted, inviting, etc.)

The residential areas with many nice homes was very appealing. Big seller for prospective residents.

People were friendly.

People contacted were friendly; but not many people around.

Few people about; but they were all friendly. Comfortable.

DESCRIBE THE PEOPLE YOU MET (Friendly, helpful, etc.)

The manager at Community Center very friendly and helpful.

All were friendly and seemed to want to help.

We were looking up to see signs of stores (over awnings) and a man laughingly asked us "if things were looking up?" People were friendly.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS :

Not many houses for sale. New building in progress. Good use of old school building; senior citizens seem to be looked after.

Didn't see any handicapped parking. Not many houses for sale; that's good. Great use of old school buildings; gives the elderly access to downtown too. Noticed new building in progress.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SIX MONTHS FROM NOW

Schools, Tri-County Center. Nice residential areas.

Community Center, Central Park! I'll come back to Jan's.

Seems safe and quiet despite the size.

It seems like a comfortable and safe place to live; would consider it if I were relocating.

*6. Doing it Right!*

A, List the 5 MOST positive things you observed about the community.

1. Residential areas.

community Center.

Senior Citizens seem very important to the community.

Excellent facilities for elderly. Good use of old school buildings.

2. Public facilities; i.e. Tri-County & Post Office.

Parks; Central & Race Track.

The parks are made to be used; had ball parks, swimming pool and tennis courts.

Parks; lots of activities.

3. Two senior citizen housing projects.

School complex.

Schools in good condition.

Clean residential & business areas.

4. Hot pork, mashed potatoes & gravey lunch at Town Edge.

Main Street and Fulton give you lots of room for expanding a "downtown" area or business district.

The size of the hospital; larger than expected.

Schools in good condition.

5. Two nice looking banks.

People were friendly.

There is room, opportunity & monies for growth.

Opportunity for growth in downtown area.

- B. Describe ONE idea that you will steal for use in your **OWN business/community** and describe the steps you will take to implement it within the **NEXT 72 HOURS!**

Tri-County Center; we need a "youth center" in our town. We have no orientation place for 8 to 15 year olds.

I'm going to check out the upstairs windows in downtown Clinton. I think I'd like to build a new school & have our middle school be the Community Center; but that may take 72 years!

I was impressed with the parks and activities they had. If you can keep the kids happy and at home they will want to stay in the area with their families. So this concept would be good for any community.

Swimming pool and youth activities in parks stress to Clinton community the importance of keeping youths involved with good activities.