

First Impressions

of

Lena, IL

Cuba City Visit 7/22/93

*A program for
community improvement*

Developed by:

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Grant County UW-Extension Resource Agent

GRANT COUNTY

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP.

We made our **First Impressions** visit to **Lena** on Thursday, July **22**, 1993. The drive took about one hour for the **42** mile distance. We arrived around 10:00 a.m. The temperature was in the high 60's - low 70's and it was cloudy the entire time of our visit.

Our Team consisted of five members, all male, ranging in age from late **20's** to mid 50's. Two were lifelong Cuba City residents and another has lived in the community for **22** years. The occupational **mix** included one self employed business owner, one educator, one employee of the City, one utility employee and myself, the Director of the Grant County Economic Development Corporation.

A couple of our team members were somewhat familiar with Lena, but no one knew a lot about you.

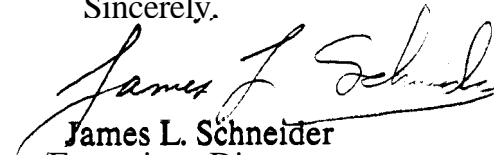
We spent over **4** hours in your community, alternately driving around the area and then personally stopping in stores, etc.

As you will see in this report, we were very impressed by your community. Your strongest asset by far, is the positive attitude that locals have about Lena. We didn't meet one single person who wasn't a great salesperson for Lena. (I thought every town was supposed to have one old sorehead?? Do you keep yours locked up??)

We did note some areas that could use improvement, but overall, we were very impressed.

Thank you for doing this exchange with us. It was a pleasure to "**join you**" if even for only a short while. "**Keep Growing**". Please feel free to call me if you have any questions regarding this report.

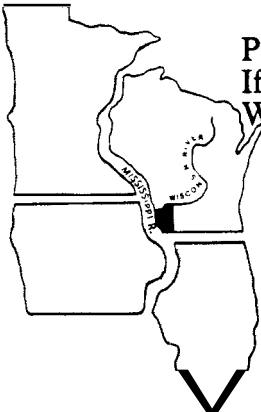
Sincerely,


James L. Schneider
/Executive Director

P.S.

If you ever want to pick **up** you community and move it somewhere else, We'd gladly accept you in Grant County.

WE'VE GOT THE CORNER ON GOOD BUSINESS



Bronson Boulevard
Fennimore, Wisconsin 53809

Phone 608/822-3501

As you approach the community.....

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

Small town - Not too much going on.

Lived here 26 years ago, so I had a pretty good idea of what Lena was all about.

I expected a much smaller community than what is actually there. I didn't expect as much retail business in the downtown area.

Had been through Lena a couple of times on my way to Rockford, but really didn't pay any attention to it. My impression of the area is influenced more by Warrens.....and that's not necessarily positive.

11. The "five minute" impression:

Take one drive through the community without stopping. As you exit the community, pull over to the side of the road and write down what you felt about the town with only this quick look. Do this in silence, don't talk with the other in your group for this part.

Small town, lots of business, nice elderly housing.

Clean; Spread out - Looks like a nice golf course. Well kept nursing home, impressive banks.

All points of interest, ie. parks, library, city hall, swimming pool, etc. were very well marked.

Came in on Stagecoach Rd. Homes in good shape. Bigger than I expected. Seem to be doing ok. Neat antique store. I'd take a second look. Newer than I expected.

III. Driving...evaluate EACH entrance.

Go about 1/2 - 1 mile out each road and return. List each road (61 North, etc.) and list positives and negatives for each.

Stage Coach Rd. - No Signs

Bigger sign to proclaim town would help.

Well Kept Schools, noticeable Citizens State Bank sign.

Lake Rd. - No Signs

Le-Aqua-Na Lake excellent lake to campgrounds. A real plus for town.

Could advertise lake to tie in town better.

Impressive new homes.

Lakeside- New houses, no signs, well kept area.

Hwy 73 N. - Has Sign, but needs repair and paint, leave off advertising.

Sign, but needs repair from North.

Unfinished sign. Impressive park building, and park side.

Just putting in Signs. Parkside area is very nice. Lions Park -

Nice sign. Excellent Park (couldn't find any restroom).

Overall, each entrance to town is in pretty good condition.

Galena - Lena Rd. - No sign.

US 20 - Very nice sign.

Hwy 73 S. - Nice sign, but very hard to read
Good shape, but hard to read
Good signage. Well kept and good looking nursing home and Doll
Apartments.
Lena Vet Clinic, nice building and great sign. Memorial Manor,
Doll Apts., and Bank - very well kept.

State Bank Sign, No junky areas coming from the east. Lake Rd. - Impressive
New homes.

Stagecoach Rd. East - No signs other than population sign. Businesses well
kept. Lena Milling/Mineral Center - Well maintained.

Stagecoach Rd. West - Fairway Hills - Where does all of this come
from? Impressive. Jaycees - Nice park. Welcome to Lena sign at
Golf course needs maintenance (and a lot shorter message - too
much!)

IV. (a) Driving...evaluate the downtown business area:
(Signs, appearance, size, etc.)

Nice shops. Some in need of repair. Restaurants very adequate.

Many downtown businesses could use an outside facelift. Overall sidewalks
throughout town need repair. Excellent food store (Nollers).

Business area kept clean. Could use more refuse dumpsters west on Main St.
Signs could be more pronounced.

Unusual location off the "main" highway, but looks good. Seems prosperous and
lots of cars using the parking areas.

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

Business area very spread out. Almost everything was covered except for men's
store.

Impressed with the variety and number of places for a small town.

No other business "area" per se', but some scattered businesses. Most were
surprisingly well kept up. Several newer business buildings - Great.

V. Driving...comments on residential:

Very nice residential area. Only saw three houses that were in poor shape.
Most had very nice yards.

Clean, neat, seems like a good town to settle in.

Pretty doggone nice. Amazed at the amount of building going on in recent years. Are you sure you only have 2600 people???

VI. Driving...comments on:

a. street signs

Good, Clean and Concise.

Okay.

Some signs missing or crooked. Almost all signs in good shape and very noticeable.

In place and in excellent condition. "No Parking" signs are old and rusted.

b. traffic patterns/street conditions

Streets average, Watch for railroad.

Good, have to use caution with railroad tracks.

Street layout are somewhat haphazard.

Traffic patterns are like many older communities - designed by Random Wanderers and Associates. Fortunately, it is not really confusing.

c. welcome signs (at entrances)

One nice sign on US 20. Need more at other entrances.

Too small, needs painting. US 20 has an excellent sign.

Can see where work is being done to install all new welcome signs.

Old signs too busy, too small, need maintenance. New signs are great - You might want to look at putting a light colored oval being the "slogan" area. The blue disappears against that background.

d. direction signs to parks, schools, hospitals/clinics, attractions, services (i.e. police), etc.

Didn't see police signs. Schools small, needs improvement. Park sign okay.

School signs too small.

Direction signs were very noticeable.

Nice signs to Parks & schools. (Lots of places forget the school sign - take it for granted:)

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

Sign well defined, busy, growing, new, etc.

Didn't See one.

Did not see one.

No Industrial Site was noticed.

Didn't find any - (12 miles from Freeport - I guess I shouldn't be surprised.)

III. Driving...comments on schools:

Schools were in good condition. Nothing to jump out at you. Kind of Blah.

Good, but nothing to catch your eyes. Elementary School seemed to be in best shape.

School buildings and grounds were all well kept.

Schools are well maintained. School near downtown was especially well kept up for an older building - nice sign. High School and Junior High are well kept facilities - impressive. (Shows you care about your kids.)

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

Lions park is very nice. Lake Le-Aqua-na was very impressive. Something to grow on. Football field was poor.

City Park - Excellent. Athletic Facilities - Fair.

Parks and playground equipment were adequate. Swimming pool was nice. Tennis courts were average with great nets.

Lions Park was exceptional. (Except I didn't see any restrooms.)
Le-Aqua-Na - Amazingly well utilized area and best maintained public area I have ever seen. Well laid out with good use of what may actually be a small amount of space. Gives "privacy" feeling, How old is this park and how do you do this without fees. Tremendous asset. Not sure I would like the "No Alcohol" rules if I lived there. I suppose this is a typical over-reaction to past situations that got out of hand.

Jaycee Park - Nice job. Great to see that there are organizations that care about the community.

X. Driving...comments on other:

a. hospitals/clinics

Two Clinics. Need better signs.

Two very nice clinics.

Two Clinics. Neither were well defined with signs.

No Hospital. Clinic available and noticeable.

b. billboards/advertising

Didn't see any.

Overall town signs were too small. School signs hard to find.

None.

Nothing that I found offensive.

c.

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

Appearance, displays, signs, etc.

Some nicely kept. Some need repair. Grocery Store (Nollers), needs an exterior face lift. Inside was very nice.

Window display good. Some stores need a facelift.

Displays in windows were good. Area was very clean.

Nice attention to storefronts. Confer Chevrolet, you done a nice job with your building. Good job on -----.

Nohlers Food Center - I stood directly in front to your store and wasn't sure you were. I did go in and frankly, you're a pretty impressive store inside. I wouldn't have guessed it front the outside appearance.

Dental Office - Very nice sign.

"??? Publishing" an eyesore. Is this a functioning business or is the building abandoned?

Priggs House - I am not sure that your current facade & sign fit with the building.

Iron Horse - Like the Mural - sign above the building is good, but showing it's age.

Opera House - Simply Beautiful.

Who sells the lace window treatments? Saw a number of them - nice touch.

Your storefront signs were viewed from across the tracks are good looking and informative. Just a note - if you have an overhang in front of your store, you need a sign under it for pedestrians.

XII. Walking around...comments on people:

Were they friendly, did they know answers to questions, did they try to help,

appearance, etc.

Friendly- Most said hello, or waved. Waitress at restaurant was not too talkative.

Very friendly, everyone very positive about town.

People were very friendly. Directions to various places of interest were given quite accurately. When asking for places to eat, things to see, residents always gave a local business to attend.

Very friendly people. Homespun Harvest. Rebecca's Parlor - Very outgoing person.

Helpful. What a pleasant place to stop. Owner was not originally from area, but she loves it there and is very knowledgeable about the area. Only place that had "Lena - Discover us" brochure. Good brochure. Marvelous work with the building - a real eye catcher.

Waitress at Mr. Rogers was helpful - asked others if she didn't have answers. Gave good directions.

Clover Patch Tea Room - Beautiful, full of people and an exceptionally friendly (and efficient) waitress. Interesting menu selections. I can't believe the number of good eating places this town has.

Leaman's Furniture - Nice display.

----Bank - I asked about using TYME card in C--- Machine. Teller was very helpful and also knew where nearest TYME Machine was in Monroe.

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

a. community brochure (tourist type)

Didn't see one.

Good.

Good Brochure. Very impressive and good information.

I never found one, although another member of our group did. That glossy one ~~was~~ impressive, but I never saw one in any of the businesses or information booth.

b. businesses/attractions brochures or directory

Stephenson County Brochures are great. Do a good job of covering your community.

None.

Good.

Same as above.

c. community profile (demographic, industrial type information for prospective business people, etc.)

None.

Good.

Same as Above.

Nothing in information center. I'll consider "Growing with you" if I can find out who "you" are. Profile is a must!

d. map

Other members in group said it was very good.

Very good.

Same as Above.

Info center NEEDS a permanent map. Historical society brochure has only map I found. Tri-State Tourism Council brochure had an attractions map.

e. other (ie. bulletin/notice tourism, kiosks, etc.)

Maybe downtown could have a place for future events.

Info booth was pleasant and attractive. Could use some permanent maps, directory, and recreational info (Plexiglass covered so no one takes them off the wall).

Got a real kick out of Kaysers Butchering "Leapin Lena" edition. What a marvelously friendly piece. Any area that inspires that kind of pride and loyalty has got a lot going for it.

XIV. City Hall...describe your visit:

a. appearance of facility, including signing

Old looking exterior - Could use a face lift.

Old, but nice.

Good signs. Looks like a hall just remodeled.

Didn't visit.

b. helpfulness of staff

Didn't go in.

Very nice.

Staff was very helpful.

c.

XV. Chamber of Commerce...describe your visit

a. did people know where it was (or who to refer you to?)

Businessmen Association.

No Chamber, had Businessmens Association. People knew who President of Association was.

There was no "Chamber" but people thought they knew who the head of the business group was.

b. comment on information available

Good information. List of all businesses.

Info Center had some information but not much on Lena stuff. Could have a sign at center "for info on Lena Contact: Joe Smith Business

Assn. President
XXX-XXX-XXXX
Address"

c. comment on staff

d. other (hours, appearance, locations, etc.)

No building.

The Business hours were quite accommodating to the public.

XVI. Other stuff....

a. public restrooms (available, condition, etc.)

Did not see one.

None - Could use one on Main Street.

None available.

Only with restaurants. Those were clean.

b. payphones (working, phonebook intact, etc.)

Phone located on main street next to cannon.

Only one on Main Street. Could use more.

Payphones in good working order with phone books.

Found several, very noticeable, well maintained and looks intact.

c. Parking

Very good. Lots of spaces.

Excellent.

Very good on and off street parking.

Good use of parking by tracks. Seemed to be plenty of spaces and lots of people using them.

d. water fountains, benches, etc.

Didn't see a water fountain. Only a bench on Main St. in front of bank.

No water fountains. Could use more benches. Need more Garbage containers on lower end of main street.

Some benches. No water fountains.

Liked the current planters and waste receptacle. Your sidewalks need work. The one by the gradeschool is terrible.

e.

WRAP UP

A. Using your "senses"

1. What does the community TASTE like? (Specialty bakery/restaurant, etc.)

Nice selection of Restaurants. Liked Grocery Store downtown, Reminded me of years gone by.

Definitely a German flavor.

"Different" menu selections (ie. Hawaiian Breakfast at Mr. Rogers).

2. What does the community SMELL like:

Nice, Very Friendly.

Small town hard working.

Nothing negative. I swear I could smell sweet corn but I couldn't find the source.

3. What SOUNDS did you hear?

Train. Goes way too fast through town. Hwy 73 needs a train road block.

Quiet. A bedroom community.

Traffic - Lots of it, but not overbearing - just busy.

Train - When it goes through, you knew it.

4. What did the community FEEL like (emotional response, i.e. cold/warm, crowded /deserted, inviting, etc., or physical response, i.e. rough streets, etc.)

Very friendly. Sidewalks on North side of main street need repair.

Very warm.

Very friendly atmosphere.

Felt busy, alive and friendly. *Also* seemed a lot bigger than population indicates. (Except for sidewalks). Feels "Prosperous".

Railroad Center - Rumble of trains had a certain charm to it.

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

1. Lake, State Park
2. Parks
3. Businesses - Variety
4. Pool
5. Restaurants

1. Clean
2. Friendly
3. Lake Le Aqua
4. Good business community
5. Good place to raise a family

1. Neat and Clean
2. All needs seem to be met
3. Very friendly town
- 4.
- 5.

1. Quality Housing (New & Old)
2. Attention to Storefronts
3. Information Center
4. Friendly, positive people
5. Parks (Jaycees/ Lions - Le -Aqua - Na)

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

I liked the Information Booth self service concept. I'm sure it **has** some drawbacks but it is visible and with some modifications it could be an effective resource.

D. What will you remember most about the community six months from now:

Lake, State Park.

Positive attitude of the people.

Very neat and well groomed lawns. Plenty of new homes.

That they are doing so much while competing with Freeport and Monroe.

E. Other comments (that just didn't seem to fit anywhere else!)

Nice town. I go through Lena every ten days and I never knew they had so much to offer. I will likely return to area especially for a one day vacation.

Visited the Jaycee "Memorial" Volleyball nets after hearing some senior citizens talking about the event at the Clover Patch Tea Room. It is obvious that you have fun and that people enjoy what is happening in their area.