

First Impressions

of

LIBERAL

A program for community improvement

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The "First Impressions" instrument may be used by any community free-of-charge. However, we request that the author receive credit on the front cover. We would also appreciate copies of any final reports, media releases, or comments you might have about the process.

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FOREWORD

All too often community leaders say--and may honestly believe--that they want to improve their community. However they may go about it the wrong way. Too much self-evaluation and too little outside evaluation may continue to mask real problems and opportunities.

The First Impression program is designed to bring outside community leaders, leaders very much like yourself, to a community they are not familiar with to express their First Impression of that community. The team members will pose as visitors, vacationers, shoppers, prospective business owners, and they will look at your community from that point of view.

The team arrives unannounced in your community. The basis for the team's First Impression of your community will be through the auto windshield; visiting with people on the street; and visiting with business owners. The observations are jotted down and then compiled into a community report. No individual business or comment will be considered as a First Impression of the total community, it will be the composite of all.

These impressions, true or false, are the result of the team members' honest and straightforward feelings about your community. We feel that if a team of visitors feels this way, then others coming into your community may also have the same First Impressions.

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

Our initial perception was not particularly nice. We envisioned a city beset with minority problems; young people working in factories; a transient population and a lack of neatness and less than appealing smell.

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

Positive: We weren't exactly turned on by any one thing. Yet at the same time, there wasn't anything that made us inclined to turn around and drive back.

Negatives: No impression. There was no "defining moment" where we knew that we were entering Liberal.

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

A. Appearance

1. **Downtown** Seems relatively well-developed. Even vacant buildings aren't trashy.
 - Neat and attractive signage.
 - There were no downtown trees, but the trees weren't really necessary.
2. **Residential** The residential area was nice enough. As with any community some areas were more attractive than others. Although we did think the residential fences were a little excessive in some areas.
3. **Industrial park** The "Industrial Park" was not all that noticeable. It was also not very well "signed", as it shared a sign advertising the airport.
4. **Parks** By-in-large, the parks were well kept. We were especially impressed with the "Blue Bonnet" Park, the gazebos and playground equipment.
5. **Schools** They were not marked especially well. The High School, however, was very attractive.
6. **Infrastructure (Sidewalks, streets, lighting, etc.)**

The downtown sidewalks were narrow, but looked to be in good condition.
7. **Other** Some areas need mowing ordinance enforced.

B. signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

The East entrance was not well-signed (some trash in front of sign). However, the Southwest entrance had a big "Liberal" sign. Very Good!

2. Streets

The streets were cleaned adequately and looked to be in satisfactory condition.

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

There were no signs designating hospitals, Jr. College and parks. Needs to be better signed.

4. Storefront signs

Good! Large enough to see, but not too overbearing.

5. Industrial park

Not very well designated.

6. City Hall, police, etc.

In a good location, but needs to be better "signed."

7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

They need signs to more thoroughly designate location of museums, especially the "Coronado Museum."

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

A. Convention & Visitors Center

Sign is not very visible because of fence.

1. Is there a street map?

Yes? Very helpful.

2. Community brochure/directory

Yes! Assisted greatly in helping us locate good tourist and business spots.

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

Small business brochures & flyers did an exceptional job of advertising business and industrial opportunities.

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

Helpful ladies at visitors information center and Chamber of Commerce.

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

Brochures did a nice job of directing us to helpful individuals.

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

We received all sorts of helpful brochures and nice pens, bookmarks, etc.

B. Chamber of Commerce

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

No. The sign was of decent size but was obscured by trees in the front lawn.

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

Very beneficial information. Phone books and museum brochures were great.

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

Brochures given to us directed us to nice eating establishments.

4. How prepared/helpful were they.

Very!

5. Convenient hours?

Regular business hours.

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

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

- a. Yes - the tourist info and chamber persons.
- b. Ordinary workers not very knowledgeable about info.
- c. Directions from service stations - very accurate.
- d.

2. Did they refer you to someone else who could help?

- a. Yes - referred to tourist information center.
- b. Rentals - Visited Chamber of Commerce for information and was helpful in having a list of rentals & names of people who handled rentals. Looked at some of the rentals and was recommended that some areas of town was not as acceptable as others. In looking at some we would have to agree. It seemed like there was adequate rentals at this time.

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

- a. Very nice.
- b. Friendly people.
- c. Appearance very clean - good business.

4. Other comments

- a. Really liked museums - air & Dorothy's house.
- b. Needed signs - very confusing to get there.
- c.

5. General

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

They know when and what events are scheduled.

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

Variety good! Many places to choose from. Had brake trouble on our 'automobile and was referred to a shop that was friendly and efficient.

C. Are there public restrooms?

Yes -- nice too!

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

Working but no phone books.

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

Yes -- also brochures about it - very nice.

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

Good. Many different places to choose from for each taste!

G. What does community SMELL like?

Road work.

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

Traffic Light lively - people walking.

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

Very warm - up to date - not too crowded but definitely not
deserted.

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

Very friendly and helpful. A lot of elderly women working -
very nice. People on the streets were very friendly and warm;
made the community feel inviting.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

Very impressed with Liberal.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY 5 MONTHS FROM NOW

Modern - neat and clean - has a and many nice parks

Seems like they have interesting events. We will remember missing the balloon flight by a day.

6. Doing it Right!

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

1. Neat and clean place.
2. Nice friendly people.
3. Parks.
4. Good business.
5. Museum and tourist attractions.

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!

The many smaller or "mini" parks in Liberal were very attractive. We would like to see similar parks in our own communities. The first thing we would do when we arrive home is to implement some of the attractive designs and equipment (gazebos, flowers, pools & slides) in the parks already present in our communities.