

# First Impressions

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Portage, WI  
By Waupun, WI

*A Program for Community Improvement*

Developed by:

Andy Lewis  
Grant County UW-Extension Resource Agent

James L. Schneider  
Exec. Dir., Grant County Economic Development Corp.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS REPORT OF PORTAGE, WISCONSIN BY WAUPUN VISITORS

1. What was my perception before visiting the community: What did I expect, etc.
  - a. I have been through Portage before and it never impressed me one way or the other. Nothing stood out in my mind that was positive or negative. It certainly did not attract me in any way that made me feel I wanted to go there for any specific reason.
  - b. I expected an older "river town" that would be somewhat run down. I felt the main street was busy and had some businesses that were doing okay. I knew very little about the town other than the main street area.
  - c. Portage, a city a little larger than Waupun, with an emphasis on the historical side, county seat activities, and many older and run down buildings. These impressions were from visits to the city over the past 30 years.
  - d. Portage always rings with history from its early explorers to the canal and railroad booms. Always the entrance to different topography and foliage. Sand country, oak, pines and clear water. A bustling downtown, lots of daily activity, county seat buildings. Lots of historic houses, yet not economically as strong as other communities and county seats that I've seen. Portage also means getting to there for access to other areas. Though I seldom stop, I've always looked forward to seeing the community. Always been a question in my mind of how Portage does it as a small community. People in Waupun, my guess, have more opportunity for better wages, a higher standard of living, yet Portage probably has more to offer and people support Portage. You have a lot that we've lost.

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

Positive:

- a. Signs for areas of interest were well-placed, easy to read and taken care of.
- b. Coming from the east there are nice rolling hills, some outcropping of rock, oak, pines, more sand country. The area going to 1-94 between the truck stop and river was nice.
- c. When approaching Portage from the East, I noticed a retirement village, which had the appearance of being rather exclusive (not investigated), golf course and signs marketing historical landmarks. The Surgeons Quarters, Indian Agency House and the Old Canal Connections the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers were well documented.
- d. Trees lined the main street area as you enter the business section. Then a very busy looking main street appears. The signs announcing Portage as "where the North begins" are attractive. The west entrance to the city comes across the Wisconsin River and gives a good appearance.

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### Negatives:

- a. Some areas **on** Highway **33**, after Surgeon General's Headquarters, looked a little unkept and junky.
- b. The outer edge of the city (east side) has some run down residences with some machinery and cars in the yard which makes it look junky. Coming **from** the south, the out-of-city shopping center looks somewhat out of place, but does house **a** Hardware Hank and the Ben Franklin Family Center. The west entrance comes **across** the Wisconsin River,
- c. Signs pointing to the Industrial Park or Hospital were not noticed. I especially looked for hospital signs...none were seen until within **2-3** blocks of it.
- d. Not **sure** of **all** the entrances or what highways, but I think you'll know which ones. **Strip type** businesses, haphazard signage, **no** real definition of what is and isn't. One business over the other, heavy traffic, bumpy roads.

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

#### A. Appearance

##### 1. Downtown

- a. Clean, trees, people, lots of occupied stores and attractive windows.
- b. Positive: Your downtown is very nice - **an** excellent choice in signage, nice lights and banners, very much 'Portage.' Trees, **guards** and sitting areas much appreciated, puts the area **on** a human scale. Seems that you have a well used active downtown - don't lose it. Very few empty store fronts, good window displays, clean alleyways. Some move seen to bring back the original buildings. I hope you continue with it, it **is** nice to **see**. **Good** Times Bookstore has a **nice** paint job and renovation. To me your downtown says 'This is **a** healthy community, not only in that area but in the rest of the community.' **Also** your businesses have good open houses, especially weekends. Certain amount of outside displays or interests, makes for a nice marketplace. **Also** noticed good utilization of total buildings - upper and lower levels seem to be used well.

Negative: Many storefronts **still** with 50's and 60's, steel, aluminum fronts - example, the bank buildings. Both banks have lots of potential underneath their 60's facades. Maybe the establishment of a historic district would help.

- c. Main Street only had a few vacant buildings. People were friendly and salespersons were helpful and pleasant. However, one restaurant with a sign on the door reading "Closed at **3 p.m.**" acted like they were closed at **2 p.m.** The soup I ordered was watered down and tasteless.

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- d. The downtown street has trees on the sidewalk, **as** well **as** park benches. Some of the store fronts have been renovated and **are** well done. There are many businesses on Main Street, **as** well **as** off. I was surprised to find a high number of business places and a wide variety of stores.

### 2. Residential

- a. Most areas were neat and well-kept. Some lovely older homes.
- b. There **are** several old houses in Portage, but most seem to be well kept. There are several areas that have been recently developed. There is a high number of apartment buildings on the North side of the city. There seems to be an active interest in keeping the residential area neat.
- c. Appeared in good repair and well kept up. I expected a more rundown appearance.
- d. Portage has a wide variety of neighborhoods, liked all of them. The new subdivision down ~~from~~ Woodridge school is very nice • nice spacious lots, good use and preservation of natural foliage, *oak*, pines, maples. Very modern approach to provide an **area** like this. The areas with WWII vintage homes are well kept, neat and tidy. **You** have many "craftsmen" style homes on many *tree-lined* streets. **Your** older historic homes, pre-1900, are beautiful and are spread throughout the town. Noticed many in disrepair or repaired with little note of the historic value. I **think** and feel that your historic homes **are** some real gems and should be brought out more. They are a plus for you. These homes and your downtown buildings need **a** concerted community effort to help them. Perhaps some historic markers or walking tour of the homes. The city of Berlin, Wisconsin, has this. I'm certain Portage has a deep history in its historic homes. Somehow make it **a** plus and not a signal of neglect and lack of care. Parks seem well distributed through the town. I didn't see any walkways or corridors connecting the parks or to out-of-town recreational areas. I suggest a canal parkway which I'll mention later.

### 3. Industrial Park

- a. Advertises curb and gutter and lighting, but was not much of that.
- b. The Industrial Park is on the north side of the city and contains **85** acres. There are several businesses located in the Park. We could not find **a** sign indicating the Industrial Park, but a **brochure**, that we obtained from the Chamber of Commerce, indicated the office and person to contact.
- c. No signs. When inquiring, the person we asked had to ask another for directions.

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- d. I did not visit your industrial park on this visit though I've viewed it previously. I do recall that it was well-marked and looked organized, if my memory serves me right. On **this** trip, I looked at existing in-town industries. A.M.P.I. and the salvage-scrap company were well kept. Although, I feel, some improvement could be made. The salvage-scrap company, would be less imposing with a better choice of paint color. A.M.P.I. looks a little transient and **stark** - lack of curb and gutter, street could be paved better, planting of foliage. The L.P. Gas Company could use some improvements, maybe a better organization of tank storage. The Soo Line Railroad - railroads in general should be condemned for producing eyesores. The area around your old depot needs a clean-up and doesn't help the businesses adjacent to the railroad area, restaurant, bars. I hope they make it. I **am** thinking about trying the restaurant as it looks inviting. I hope the bars and taverns run good, clean businesses. **This** area, although not industrial, is a rather intriguing **area**. A spin-off of the old railroad days could be a fun area for people to participate.

### 4. Parks

- a. The parks were well signed and seemed to be very accessible to the residents. One park was located on Silver Lake which provides a swimming area during the summer months. A swimming pool is located in the Junior High School. A very fine hand out was available at City Hall indicating all of the recreational activities for each season.
- b. Parks look well-kept. Clean rest rooms in Parquette Park.
- c. Driving around I did not see many parks, except for several small ones. And one large one used for large gatherings and picnics. It had shelters.
- d. Worden Collipp Park - signs need to be more official. Not **sure** if its a city **park** or private. Indian Agency and Surgeons Quarters - need better signage. More of what you have for downtown **or** Sunset Park signs, Both of these area **are** very nice, but signage and approach lack an invitation or emanate what they're about. I've drive past both historic areas many times but had little invitation to stop. **This** time, I found both areas very interesting and fun. Veterans Memorial Park - very nice, quite active. The entrance area for this and the County Fairgrounds need more established look and upkeep. Area between A.M.P.I. and Fairgrounds entrance could work into a nice area. I really think you should take advantage of your canal area as a total park area. I noticed debris and **junk** in the canal by the Indian Agency, but nice clean water. It would be great for non-motorized boating, nature historical walkway, cross-country skiing for residents and visitors. It could help to link your town and surrounding areas.

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### 5. Schools

- a. The public included buildings of all ages. The high school and an elementary school are located on the North side of the city. The Junior High School is located near downtown. There are ~~three~~ elementary church-related schools available. A branch of the Madison vocational school is also available.
- b. Taxpayer dollars seem to be at work.
- c. From the street the buildings appeared satisfactory. No inquiries about the programs were made.
- d. High school seems very nice, modern, well kept and attractive. I would suggest more foliage by the athletic field and adjacent roads - some of your natural growth, pines, oaks, etc. The intersection by Sli-fer and New Pinery, just down by high school needs traffic lights. Woodridge school is quite nice with many natural trees and foliage. M.A.T.C. is a great asset to your community and the apartments close by are good. Nice designs on the upper level schools. Over all, schools **look** good. Continue to bring in the upper level educational institution, a plus for a town your size. Nice spin-offs.

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

- a. The sidewalks where available were adequate. Streets were very nice in the more recent developed areas. Some of the older streets were in **need** of repair. We noted that many areas of the city did not have sidewalk or curb and gutter.
- b. Seemed to be several newly-paved streets and sidewalks in good condition. Functional and decorative lighting in downtown area. There were trees with grates and they were not messy!
- c. Satisfactory.
- d. Overall Portage seems to do a good job of keeping its parts in working order and repaired, maintained, but some improvements could be made. More established curb and gutter on edges of town and within. Example: Portage Square and Village House apartments had no sidewalk. Areas around **A.M.P.I.** back to Veterans Memorial Park had little or no curb. Downtown is a real asset for Portage - nice lamps, good choice of banners; I enjoyed the sitting areas. Liked the street lamp by St. John Episcopal Church and the neon Police sign. Your county buildings should emanate, perhaps a stronger sense of well-being. Most city buildings do simple things like a canopy on the entrance way, foliage, and better choices in paint color. Your sewage treatment area looks good, water tower by hospital **needs** a change from the 70's era or hot-air balloon look. Perhaps your city logo in downtown would be a better choice. Most alleyways are kept good and streets seem o.k. Maybe where the brick has been exposed by worn cement - you can black top. You might better establish a positive historical element of Portage. Many beautiful tree-lined streets. If you're not a Tree City **U.S.A.** you should be.

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### 7. Other

- a. While the airport was **small**, it did have a paved runway. I was impressed by the size of the Divine Savior nursing home and the new Physicians Clinic located next to the Divine Savior Hospital.
- b. No answer.
- c. Traffic moved easy through the city.
- d. Portage certainly should be commended on **an** overall good to excellent appearance. You've done a lot to get there and to sustain it, I've noticed. I do feel certain areas say something to me. I repeat the lack of curb and gutter, it says something about the overall well-being of the community. Your older historic homes need care and **recognition and** not the **flip** side **as** a community that doesn't care. The negative also emanates possible social ills and poverty. Your downtown seems to be a strong point and has survived the mall attacks, so far. To me, you **need** to continue your downtown look and improvements. Especially the historical look or whats really there and get rid of the plastic, ceramic, aluminum facades. It will prove to be cheaper and longer lasting. Its a sad and costly thing for a community to lose its downtown. The **strip** mall areas need to be addressed. Most lack planning and seem in decay. **Quite** a challenge to balance fringe areas businesses without ruining your downtown area. I noticed all the bank branch offices, yes they need to compete, but the **50's** and **60's** look in the downtown hurts. Another part of Portage that **seem** strong is that you **are** original. You have real things, history, business and industry, homes and people. It **seems** to me that you **need** to exploit some of these areas but don't lose yourselves such **as** Wisconsin Dells has.

## B, Signing

### 1. Community entrance/exit signs

- a. The entrance signs **are** attractive and well done. **The** motto or slogan: "Portage - where the north **begins**" seemed to be catchy to a visitor and very appropriate.
- b. Good-looking, eye-catching signs.
- c. From East Highway **33** - None noticed.
- d. Many of the entrances were a **maze** of signage, most badd, most for outskirt businesses, Very uncontrolled, lack of planning.

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### 2. Streets

- a. Street signs were pretty standard and were very readable for the most part.
- b. A few street signs needed replacing. Most good.
- c. Well-marked.
- d. Street signs good. Directional signs good. Found it quite easy to get around non-familiar **areas** of Portage.

### 3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

- a. Park signs very readable and well done. The hospital signs were the standard sign **used** throughout the state. Perhaps a few **more** would help direct a stranger **as** the hospital **is** located in a residential area,
- b. Pretty good. Several parks in and around business areas and good looking signs.
- c. Signs to hospital very limited.
- d. Most were good, didn't know if Worden Collipp Park was public or private. Sunset Park sign good. Indian Agency and Surgeon Quarters' signs need to emanate what they offer. Simple but better.

### 4. Storefront signs

- a. Stores are well signed. Many different kinds of signs were used on the **Main** Street. It was easy to determine the type of business housed in a building by the signs that were **used**.
- b. Most in the downtown **are** good. The strip malls **are** in bad taste **and** strip businesses need some controls. They really don't do Portage justice at this time.
- c. **Good** signs on businesses.
- d. Neat and attractive 'and indicated products sold.

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### 5. Industrial Park

- a. We could not locate a sign for the **Industrial Park**.
- b. Not an easy place **to find** and we couldn't find any signs at Industrial Park identifying it.
- c. None.
- d. If my memory is correct the signage is good, neat, inviting.

### 6. City Hall, police, etc.

- a. A new municipal building was constructed in **1974** containing the City **Hall**, **Police** Station and **Fire** Station. The City **Hall** was well marked and the Police Station had a neon sign. I was **surprised** that there was no sign indicating the City Library which was located in the former home of Zona Gale.
- b. Nice looking building with visible signs to identify each entity.
- c. Centrally located.
- d. Thought both were very nice. The sculpture of the portage is great. The large bell by the fire house is nice. Thought the police station looked friendly, yet official. I like the neon sign. It **stood** out and the canopy was nice.

### 7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

- a. Billboards were prevalent on all sides of the city. Most were adequate. A couple were **run** down and in **need** of repair on the south side.
- b. They were plentiful and helpful, not overdone.
- c. Limited.
- d. I think with your proximity to Wisconsin Dells and Baraboo, you need to do something about billboards and advertising. I suggest a more tasteful controlled effort. You have a quality town that serves both year-round residents and vacationers. Don't lose your town perhaps as Wisconsin Dells has.

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### 4. Visitor/community information

#### A. City/Village Hall

##### 1. Is there a street map?

- a Yes, it was an **8 1/2 x 11** inch page costing **15** cents. It was of **small** print and hard to read, but did show all of the streets. A larger, more readable one was obtained at the Chamber office, but it did not cover the entire city.
- b. Did not inquire.
- c. Had to buy a street map for **15** cents.
- d. Did not inquire,

##### 2. Community brochure/directory

- a **This** was not given to me, but Marie at the City Hall told me a lot about the city including where many things were located including areas where houses could be built, where apartments were, where the hospital and schools were located and where motels were located.
- b. Did not inquire.
- c. Referred to Chamber of Commerce.
- d. Did not inquire.

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

- a I did not get **this** information from the **City Hall**, but it was not specifically requested. Some information obtained at the Chamber office provided some of **this** information.
- b. Did not inquire.
- c. The person at the counter had **only** limited information about industrial opportunities. When asked if there was an industrial park committee she indicated that the part-time mayor and another city official took care of that business.
- d. Did not inquire.

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### 4. Recommendation on place to stay/eat/visit..etc.

- a. This was readily provided and seemed to be very accurate. The Chamber Office had a nice map showing the motel locations, but there out of stock.
- b. Did not inquire.
- c. When asked told me to go north on Highway 51 about 2 or 3 miles.
- d. Did not inquire.

### 5. Contact people and addresses listed if I want more info.

- a. Marie was very good and told me to call her for any further information.
- b. Did not inquire.
- c. Did not inquire.
- d. Did not inquire.

### 6. Complimentary Items (Postcards, bookmarkers, coupons, etc.)

- a. I received ~~more~~ brochures about the community that were very valuable rather than the above items.
- b. Did not inquire.
- c. No complimentary items.
- d. Did not inquire.

## B. Chamber office/visitor info center

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

- a. Did not inquire.
- b. In a nice setting right downtown. We didn't ask anyone because we found it right away.
- c. Chamber of Commerce located downtown. Very visible and when asking for information I was referred to the Chamber office.
- d. Did not inquire.

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2. **Comments on info available (Street map/brochures/community profile/etc.)**
  - a. Did not inquire.
  - b. Very helpful with suggestions and gave out community profile **similar** to one our Waupun Industrial Development Corporation had prepared. Lots **of** brochures and two different street maps.
  - c. Brochure titled "Portage: Where The North Begins" includes a city map and county map and area places to shop, eat, places to stay. **This** brochure was included with other material, not singled out as background information on Portage. **An** excellent hand **out**,
  - d. Did not inquire.
  
3. **Recommendations on places to stay/eat/visit etc.**
  - a. Did not inquire.
  - b. Had several and recounted own experiences. There are seven motels, with **a** new 100 bed one coming. Council just gave go ahead **this** past week.
  - c. Covered in Portage brochure.
  - d. Did not inquire.
  
4. **How prepared/helpful were they.**
  - a. Did not inquire.
  - b. Knew their job.
  - c. **You** had to be specific on what you wanted. When asked about tours they **did** not **know** what to say or indicated a person to call.
  - d. Did not inquire.

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### 5. Convenient hours?

- a. Did not inquire.
- b. Hours were 8:30 - 4:30 Monday through Friday and 8:30 - 2:00 on Saturday. Someone in office at **all** times during open hours.
- c. Open daily.
- d. Did not inquire.

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

#### 1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

- a.
  - a) The people I *talked* with were very knowledgeable about the community. Some had lived here **all** of their lives.
  - b) They felt that it **was** a good community that provided good shopping good employment, good schools and **good** services.
  - c) They felt their geographical location was an asset to the community. **Only** a short way from Madison, Baraboo and Wisconsin Dells.
- b. Everyone I talked with seemed quite well-informed.
- c.
  - a) Go to Chamber of Commerce.
  - b) Told me how many motels in town
  - c) One merchant said when **asked**, "Who to contact about tours?" Gave the **name**, phone number and address of someone.
- d. Waitress and matre'd were both knowledgeable. What they didn't know, they said so. Asked them about the old photographs in restaurant and where they got them.

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

- a. Yes, they would send me to a certain individual or building if they didn't know an answer **to** a question I had asked.
- b. The questions **I** asked were answered by the individuals.
- c.
  - a) Chamber of Commerce
  - b) Merchant gave me the name of someone to contact about tours.
- d. Waitress when asked answered and was looking to other employee to see if she was giving the right information.

### 3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

- a. The people were well dressed. **Had** a positive attitude and were friendly. They seemed eager to make you welcome in Portage.
- b. Good attitudes, good appearance.
- c. **Good** in an offhand sort of way. Very business like, helpful and repeated come again.
- d.
  - a) Very good attitude **from** waitress, very helpful and seemed to enjoy her job, quite professional.
  - b) Teenage **girl** very helpful in directions. Took the time to think it out. Didn't back off **from** talking to **an** older couple. They were **30** something.

### 4. Other comments

- a. **This** community has **a daily** newspaper which is a definite asset.
- b.
  - a) The Ben **Franklin** and Ace Hardware stores were stuck out on the edge of one entrance to town. Set way back so **as** not to be readily visible to traffic, beyond a run-down big building that should've been tom down. **It** did not look like either store was very busy on several passes! Poor, poor location.
- c. The **mix** of stores and shops on Main Street (Highway **33**) for one block and a half: **2** banks, **2** antique stores, **2** shoe stores, **1** hallmark card, **1** bookstore, **1** bridal, **1** **sports** store, **3** drug stores, **1** gift shop, **1** medical clinic, **3** ladies shoes & lingerie, **3** insurance offices, **1** **kiddy** comer, **1** mens wear, **1** jewelry, **1** hardware, **2** cafes, **2** barber shops, **3** taverns, **1** photo shop, **1** sewing shop, **2** laundry and drycleaning, **1** attorney and St. Vincent De Paul.
- d. No additional comments.

5. General

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

- a. Yes, their directions were very accurate. The upcoming events were well advertised via posters. Most could provide historical **data**.
- b. Didn't get into much of this. Do know that some of their facilities came about because of rich benefactors.
- c. The residents know their community and history, however, they **are** rather indifferent, mainly because they **are** with it every **day** and it does not **seem** interesting or of importance in their daily lives.
- d. The ones I talked to did. Waitress at Mexican restaurant explained the gateway to the north. She's originally from Mauston. Young teenage girl with friend gave us directions to train station. She took the time and effort to think it out and was very polite, surprising for that age.

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

- a. Great retail **mix** downtown and seems to be a busy place. **Lots** of lodging and choices.
- b. Many types of retail **stores** were available. I was impressed with many businesses and stores in **this** town. There **are** several motels in and around the city. These would cause people to stay in Portage for longer than a drive-through visit.
- c. Covered this in question 4c.
- d. Yes, very much variety in retail. Some surprises. Bookstore, **nice** clothing stores for a small community. Seemed like many good services, keep your movie theater! **Your** strip malls are bad. They really don't do your community justice at this time. They look like urban sprawl and uncontrolled.

C. Are there public restrooms.

- a. Some of the parks had restrooms - clean.
- b. We found these available at the city park and in the municipal building and the county services building.
- c. In County Building.
- d. Yes, in the parks.

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

- a Yes. Also a pay phone in the chamber office.
- b. They were available in the downtown area and phone books were present.
- c. In bank lobby.
- d. Yes, the ones I checked.

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

- a. Activity there, but a few buildings were run-down and older. It took us a while to find it. Not **as** prosperous looking as Waupun's.
- b. It looks active and has some new buildings **being** planned. **A** 100-room motel **and** Wal-Mart will open **in** one month.
- c. Persons did not know the industrial **area** as 'Industrial Park.' They had a very vague look when asked. Generally had to **ask** someone else, before **directing** us out Highway 16. The area appeared busy, large parking lot, about 2/3 full of cars. Did not see a sign saying Industrial Park.
- d. No answer.

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

- a. Tastes good. **Has** several good eating places.
- b. There **are** several restaurants offering a variety of menus items. We had **a fine** noon luncheon at the Saloon restaurant,
- c. Restaurants were clean, attractive, with appetizing menus.
- d. **Lots** of good food smells. Liked your bakery. It's good. **Keep it.** Restaurants kept clean - nice food choices. We at the Mexican Restaurant - great food and *drink* like the posted menus said.

### G, What does the community **SMELL** like?

- a. Smells busy!
- b. We didn't notice any distinguishing smell about the community.
- c. No disagreeable orders detected.
- d. Lots of fresh air but the popcorn wagon took it. That a good **thing** for summer. 9:10 on Saturday evening and they're still busy.

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### H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

- a. Busy, traffic, but not noisy.
- b. No specific **sounds** other than ordinary movement of cars and trucks.
- c. Traffic and truck sounds - normal.
- d. Heard the Amtrack ~~train~~, some loud **cars** and motorcycles. People **talking**, young people with friends social **talking**, laughing.

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

- a. Feels inviting on first impression. Quite receptive to **strangers** or tourists.
- b. **Warm** and inviting. Many business places that I didn't expect to find or know that was in Portage.
- c. Small town atmosphere. Warm and inviting.
- d. Saturday **afternoon** into evening - people shopping in downtown. Quite inviting. Strip malls bare and desolate. People *grocery* shopping. Movie theater lit-up. People having fun at eating places. Popcorn wagon busy.

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

- a. They smiled, that in itself is essential **to** how a community presents itself to visitors, customers, whoever. Most of the people were friendly and **willing** to be helpful, upbeat atmosphere.
- b. The people were friendly and helpful. They were **willing** to talk about their community and made me feel welcome.
- c. Persons I talked ~~with~~ were friendly and helpful. Ready and **willing** to give information we asked for, though not suggestive when asked if planning a tour "What stops or places would you suggest?" they **said** "See the Chamber of Commerce."
- d. Observed a lot of people doing things, activities in stores, restaurants. Variety of ages, families, couples, father and son. People friendly, courteous and involved in different activities. Some **buying** popcorn and evening walking. Family, large, enjoying dinner together talking, having **fun**. Four older ladies enjoying a night out.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:**

- a. None.
- b. Marie at the city hall provided me with a great **deal** of information. She was kind and polite. She spent **45** minutes with me and did appear very willing to share community information with me. She didn't feel **as** though I was taking her from other work. A lady at the police **station**, whose name I did not get, was also very helpful. These two were good Ambassadors **for** Portage and the surrounding area.
- c. Need for more signs directing persons **to** hospital and parks.
- d. Business people going about their business, yet friendly, courteous, helpful. Willing to answer questions yet give you **room** to look. Young people in groups, cars with stereos playing next to river area and Pizza Hut. Typical teenage, we don't see you, yet **didn't** feel threatened.

**WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY  
SIX MONTHS FROM W?**

- a. The hustle and bustle - activity in their business district. It would be interesting to find out how long they've **been** at revamping their downtown area, i.e. painting buildings, planting trees and put up the decorative lighting. The community seems to be up and coming, maybe a place for possible new business!
- b. The many different **kinds** of stores available. I **had** no idea there were **so** many stores in Portage. They have worked at keeping the buildings well maintained and to **modernize** them. The people like their community and **are** willing to talk about the positive aspects of their city and area.
- c. Shopping district with diverse shops and activities. I will be interested in the future **plans** to restore canal joining the **Fox** River and Wisconsin Rivers and also the rebuilding of Fort Winnebago.
- d. Seeing if what they have **will** continue and the direction they have chosen will continue. That it will enhance and embellish the community as a whole. Portage **has a** lot in a small town setting, certainly hope it will continue.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS...18

### 6. Doing it **Right!**

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

- a.
- 1) Fixing up their city streets.
  - 2) Their park and city entrance signs were very readable and placed at angles to be read **as** you drive by.
  - 3) Cars parked on downtown streets
  - 4) Trees.
  - 5) Several buildings in downtown business area have done something about their upper or second floor appearance.
- b.
- 1) Well located for receiving tourists - major highways 16, **33, 78** and I 90/94 feed into the city.
  - 2) Many interesting stores and business are located here including some unusual and unique shops that arouse the interest and curiosity of visitors.
  - 3) The people are proud of their community - many have lived here **all** of their lives. They promote it well.
  - 4) Many things to visit and **see** - Surgeons Quarters, Old **Indian** Agency House, Public Library - County seat offices an 85-acre industrial park.
  - 5) The town continues to grow - a new Wal-Mart, a new prison, new apartments, new houses. *All* healthy signs that it is good location and promotional efforts are paying off - a 100-room motel will be starting soon also.
- c.
- 1) Active shopping area (downtown).
  - 2) Historic Portage banner.
  - 3) Chamber office up town, in a nice setting.
  - 4) Older building in good repair.
  - 5) New shopping area north of Portage on Highway 51 with plenty of parking space.
- d.
- 1) Very active, strong downtown. Tells me the heart of the community is good.
  - 2) Nice historical setting **with** the potential for more. And not exploited, more **Original**.
  - 3) Diverse neighborhoods, residential **areas** offer old to new and some quite progressive.
  - 4) What hasn't been done looks like it is under consideration or being addressed.
  - 5) People are positive about the community. **This** is where they live, what they do and yes they do like it.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS ...19

### 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!

- a. The paved area around the Chamber office was very inviting looking and I would really like to see the area between Vande Zande's and Jud's developed. I have no great ideas on implementing it because Jud seems determined to sit on it. Two other ideas **are** for Nugent's and trees!! Someday...
- b. The city of Waupun **needs** more shops and unusual stores to encourage people to stop and stay in our town. Perhaps **a** discussion ~~with~~ Chamber members, city planners and economic developers of Portage could give us some ideas on how to attract and keep more stores. **All** groups in Waupun, the Chamber, downtown business association, west end, WIDC, need to brainstorm and initiate action to get our downtown and city alive. Portage has done a good job of this. Why can't Waupun?
- c. Map of Waupun, locating statues, churches, eating places, parks, chamber office, marsh haven, apple orchard, berry **farm** and Alto **Dairy**. Could be posters, placemats or brochures. *Also* a banner could be developed with theme of wild geese or statues.
- d. Catalpa **trees**, planted one.

Saw a lot of things, parts of the whole community. Would like to steal how you get your community to support you community as well as you do. We've been working on this, this report is **a** study on this area. Like how your small town supports so much retail, I've been told downtowns **are** a thing of the past.