

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF RHINELANDER

PURPOSE:

This report is intended to give the citizens & business leaders of RHINELANDER an honest appraisal of the community's existing strengths & weaknesses as seen through the eyes of a first time visitor.

OUR GROUP:

4 people from Sparta visited Rhinelander on 2-20-92. Our groups consisted of a tavern owner, a utility company manager, a retired businessman, and the Chamber of Commerce executive director. (3 males & 1 female)

THE VISIT:

We arrived at 10:00 a.m., after encountering a blizzard just south of town, which lasted almost until we left at 3:00p.m.. The snow did prevent us from being able to see the sidewalks and streets clearly, but other than that, the visit went very well. We split up into two teams, one team walking into businesses and offices in the downtown area while the other team drove around the outlying areas. After lunch, the teams switched so that each team evaluated both areas of the city for approximately 2 hours. We identified ourselves as either visitors from southern Wisconsin or Chippewa County traveling through the area or looking for lake property. Each participant filled out a worksheet with personal comments and observations.

PICTURES

Many pictures were taken, but due to the snow and the camera being new, some did not turn out. Some of those which did not turn out were of the wonderful parking facilities in the back of the stores. Others were of the industrial park.

The following combines the four separate reports.

If you have any questions about this process or information presented in this report please contact:

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

Strictly a tourist town

Knew Rhinelander is home to a paper mill and also a gateway to a plentitude of lakes in N.E. Wisconsin, therefore, given the two completely different industries, I didn't know what to expect - heavy industrial or tourist like

Lots of advertising billboards

Tourism orientated, lots of commercialism

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

Positive:

Yes, commercial area looks good, Welcome signs good, very directive to various parts of town

We entered town on Hwy 17N. The ten miles before and into Rhinelander are beautifully wooded and there are nice lakes and rivers. The park on the right with the large Norway pine is real nice. All entrances were nice.

Excellent directions into town

Good signage - excellent directions

Negative:

On 17N, yellow building with barrels should be cleaned up.

Welcome sign and organization signs after population signs.

Mobil station is an eye sore, ugly smoke stacks of paper factory, very unappealing.

Suggestions for improvement:

Although most billboards in the entrances were in good repair, more uniformity and consolidation would be more aesthetically pleasing. Uniform "Welcome to Rhinelander" signs would be a great addition. Great town. Of most importance overall, 1. "Welcome to Rhinelander" signs uniform and tasteful. 2. New, quaint-looking street lights, no plastic.

Looks good

Very hard to suggest how to rid community of an eyesore like the smoke stacks. Maybe government regulation, but its hard because of the jobs they provide.

3. As you drive around town your comments on:

A- Appearance

1. Downtown

Above average appearance

Vibrant downtown, the weather was very inclement, but the downtown was bustling

Excellent - especially back door entrance off alley - parking lot area. Clems Place eyesore

Nice buildings, kept historic value of buildings

2. Residential

Lots of old residential, however, mostly well maintained, did not observe a lot of new construction.

As in any city, nice residential and bad residential. Possibly too much residential in areas that look or border on commercial.

Nice - We did show up during a strong snow storm. Hard to see.

Well kept. No noticeable eye sores, New home constructions?

3. Industrial Park

Well laid out, all utilities in.

Difficult to find. Nice sign, but should have directional in front of entry. Nice industrial park.

Laid out nice once we found it! Individual buildings not well marked.

Need more signage. Hwy 8 was only sign. What is available in park (no sign). Businesses not identified. Need lots of work

4. Parks

1 large park Hodag, no small neighborhood parks visible.

Very nice. Nice to have park in entrance to city. All parks very nice.

Drove past two - did not see directions other than "Hodag Park"

Large and extremely well placed.

5. Schools

School plants, average maintained, did not observe inside of any schools.

I saw 3 elementary schools which were in good repair. I could not find the high school, even after asking for directions.

Could not find high school - should be marked for visiting teams for sporting events (usually nighttime)

Adequate. Signs visible.

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

Sidewalks snow covered when visited.

Streets in downtown nice and wide. Parking somewhat problematical. The lighting is in definite need of improvement. The bilious green color is unattractive and the plastic Hodags take away from the quaintness of the downtown. New antique-appearing street lamps would be a fine addition to your beautiful downtown.

Very snowy day - Hard to tell in residential area. Downtown looked good - new street lighting could be considered at some time.

Good as far as we could tell. So much snow. Super parking facilities.

7. Other

No responses

B. Signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

Good entrance signs

Uniform signs in all entries would be nice, but signs are good as is.

Very informative, even color coded

Excellent

2. Streets

Could be observed very easily

Good

Well marked

Some intersections have strange configurations, should be redone for safety reasons.

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

Not real well, especially hospital.

Hospital directionals too hidden- Difficult for an outsider to find hospital.

Hwy 17 - Took a long time to find 1st hospital sign (not on entrance to town) then they were well signed. Directions from Hwy 8 was good.

Well done

4. Storefront signs

For the most part

Attractive signs at Kid's Korner, Mel's, Smith Barney and others. Uniform signs and awnings would be good.

Good - very individual - lots of personality

Could use more imagination in design

5. Industrial Park

Very poor, passed up several times while trying to locate.

Nice sign, not to entrance.

Poor - Hard, a tough time finding it.

Needs lot of work. Businesses not identified, information signs not there.

6. City Hall, police, etc.

Very well marked

Excellent

Good, easy to find

Super job, no complaints

7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

Not overly done

Well kept up

Not as many as anticipated

Good job

8. To Central Business District

Well marked

Excellent

Great (red)

Well Signed

4. Visitor/community information
A, City/Village Hall

1. Is there a street map?

Yes

Yes, nice map.

Yes, easy to read.

Yes, very good.

2. Community brochure/directory

Yes

Yes, good info.

Great, especially if you are interested in moving to area.

Yes

3. Community profile (including business and industrial opportunities)

Very detailed one

Good info. more needed in industrial opportunities

Did not ask

Very well done

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

Highly recommend Rhinelander Restaurant (downtown) excellent food and facility.

Chamber of Commerce was great.

Yes, everyone very helpful.

People very friendly and willing to give us help. A plus (people downtown protected downtown motels and restaurants. **No** recommendations on outskirts).

5. Contact people and address listed if I want more information

Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce

Again, Chamber help was superb.

Yes, special recognition to Joe Bloom, the Mayor. A virtual storehouse of information.

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

The bookstore had nice items. Rhinelander could use history-like postcards.

None noted-

Yes

B. Chamber office/visitor info center

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

Very accessible to downtown traffic, 3 out of 4 people know where located.

Yes on both counts. The location is good because of close proximity to downtown and City Hall. **Signs** directing to Chamber not sufficient.

Yes well located - Service station attendant gave good directions. Catchy sign!

Yes, didn't need referrals.

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

Very well stocked with above info.

Very good and plentiful.

Everything we asked for was available.

Very professional office. All information readily available. Very knowledgeable staff.

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

Advised what available through the Chamber membership.

All kinds of recommendations - great.

Yes, I asked for resort areas and received good info.

Yes, very well done.

4. How prepared/helpful were they.

Receptionist very knowledgeable and helpful, a most friendly person, excellent personality.

I have never been in a Chamber of Commerce that was more helpful and prepared. Laurie and Pat were enthusiastic and extremely helpful. Great job.

Excellent - pleasant people - very helpful.

Very professional and helpful.

5. Convenient hours?

Average

Yes

Yes

Yes

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

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

a. those we talked with seemed to know what's happening in community

service station employees very knowledgeable

Spur employee knowledge

Holiday Gas station - eager and knowledgeable

- b. restaurant employees all very good
Holiday very helpful
Rhinelande Cafe & Pub - just the best
 - c. people on street good
Danny's Shoes - excellent attitude & gave good directions
2. Did they refer you to someone else **who** could help?
- a. most cases, yes
Mayor Joe suggested
Spur - check with Chamber
No need - help provided
 - b. City Hall suggested
Holiday - yes on all counts
 - c. Chamber suggested for help
3. 'Attitude, appearance, etc.
- a. average **or** better
service station - good help, a little standoffish
Spur - helpful
Very good
 - b. Restaurant (Rhinelande Cafe & Pub) employees very friendly and appearance good.
Store clerks helpful and not pushy - free to brows
 - c. People on street in downtown were a little taken a back **when I** greeted them.
4. Other comments
- a. Overall, good information and appearance.
Spur - outside telephone booth
Very knowledgeable retail

- b. Some people in town were very friendly, a very small minority in downtown could have been more pleasant.

Restaurant very informative and helpful.

General public ready and willing to help and give directions.

5. General

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

Good on directions, did not discuss others.

Yes, fairly well.

Asked 3 - good answers.

Yes

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

Good variety in retail.

A very good variety of both retail and lodgings.

Excellent - bookstore on Main St. was great - had something for everyone for rainy day.

Very good.

C. Are there public restrooms.

Did not observe.

I could not find any open.

Not noted.

Yes

D. Pay phones...are they working, phone books intact.

Did not see any

Yes, but should be more and in convenient locations.

Found several - phone books intact

Yes

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

Fairly new, looks like good potential.

Attractive industrial park, but a little on the "sleepy-side".

Yes

NO

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

Plenty of restaurants.

Rhinelande Cafe and Pub was great. It alone is a good excuse to return to visit. For a tourist town, surprised not to see more specialty bakeries, restaurants and shops.

Snow storm - none noted.

Rhinelande Cafe & Pub was just excellent in service and taste.

G. What does community SMELL like?

For a town with a paper mill, I was surprised it was relatively odorless.

Snow storm - none noted

Very nice. Only slight smell of paper mill every once in a while.

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

Muffled bustle. Much activity.

Lack of sounds - very few honking horns.

Trains. Very busy downtown.

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

Alive, inviting

A warm and active community, friendly.

Very warm - I felt welcome.

Warm - inviting

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

Very personable, helpful

Overall, the people, especially the downtown merchants were enthusiastic, helpful and friendly.

Everyone was helpful and seemed to be proud of community.

.Extremely helpful and friendly City.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

a. Mautz Paint should use their product; b. Anderson St. parking lot is a great idea; c. You have a very fine community. Keep it up.

Never did find the High School - Not marked - If I was parent of visiting teams for sport event, I would have been upset, could have missed event.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SIX MONTHS FROM NOW

For the population of Rhinelander (8,100) the activity that was occurring in the downtown business district the day we visited; there didn't seem to be anything special going in the area.

The architecture in Rhinelander is memorable. The Courthouse, 1st National Bank, Debyles, and Finishing Touches are all Beautiful. I applaud the food and friendly service at the Rhinelander Cafe and Pub. My hats off to the Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce. Pat and Laurie really have it together.

The welcome we received - The fact that the downtown offered anything a visitor could want. Variety *of* things to see and do.

A very nice place to raise a family.

6. Doing it Right!

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

1.) Excellent downtown parking facilities.

Nice variety of stores and an attractive downtown.

Friendly people.

Friendly people.

2.) Store buildings in good state in repairs.

High profile City Hall, Chamber of Commerce and City Hall.

Great downtown area.

Historic preservation of downtown.

3.) Did not see but "1" empty storefront.

Beautiful architecture in older buildings.

Color coded signing - great directions.

Signage was very good.

4.) People (residents) proud to discuss the success of "their" annual Hodag!

Appearance of activity and bustle.

Hospital and clinics looked very good and convenient health care area.

Willingness to provide service

5.) Attitude of people we met

Overall appearance and feeling is beautiful.

Courthouse and surrounding area. Good parking.

Very clean residential.

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!

I like the varied color directional signs to City Hall, police, museum, etc. Contact City Hall to get moving on project.

Do not have authority to do in 72 hours! Would highly recommend the color coded signs.

I wish I could, but you can't steal people. You HODAGS can be proud.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED BY SPARTA

1. As a new visitor to Rhinelander, what types of businesses were you surprised to see located

- in the community of Rhinelander's size?

Not surprised at types as much as the number of businesses in town

I was surprised to see a clothing store as up scale and beautiful as Debyle's. I would be surprised to see a clothing store that nice in communities 10 times the size of Rhinelander.

Size of the Debyle's store.

None

- in downtown area?

Debyle's and Mel's

Nothing noted

None

What kinds of businesses did you expect to find in Rhinelander, but were surprised were not there (compared to your community, for example)?

More craft and shops that lend themselves to tourist traffic.

Expected to see more industry.

Second hand store.

No Tyne machines for out of town people. Communities much the same as far as businesses.

2. What is the most striking feature (building, street corner, even a store sign or display) of Rhinelander's downtown commercial area?

The back or rear of community buildings are most attractive.

Debyle's lighting and 1st National Bank's etching.

Debyle's

Lots of parking.

What feature most detracts from the downtown area?

Bilious green lamp posts and plastic hodags.

Clem's Bar did not look as good as the rest of downtown - front or back.

Smoke stacks

3. Would you consider returning to Rhinelander within the next 18 months?

Yes

Yes, very definitely.

Yes

Yes

Why, or under what circumstances would you return?

Hodag

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit and would like to return for a week or two to vacation.

Fishing vacation - lots of unique shops for family shopping., Mom & kids could spend many hours and be entertained.

Anytime. Nice people. Good job!

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS
TO BE CONSIDERED BY FU-IINELANDER

1. As a new visitor to Sturgeon Bay, what types of businesses were you surprised to see located

- in a community of this size?

- in the downtown area?

What kinds of businesses did you expect to find in Sturgeon Bay, but were surprised were not there (compared to your community, for example)?

2. What is the most striking feature (building, street corner, even a store sign or display) of the city's downtown commercial area?

What feature most detracts from the downtown area?

3. Were you able to find convenient parking downtown?

Did you have any problems with parking meter rates or meter time limits?

4. Would you consider returning to Sturgeon Bay within the next 18 months? For what reasons or under what circumstances would you return (or not return)?