

First Impressions

A program for community improvement

(Profile of Salem, Illinois as compiled by
Princeton, Illinois)

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1. WHAT WAS MY PERCEPTION BEFORE VISITING THE COMMUNITY:
WHAT DID I EXPECT, ETC.

I knew Salem was similar to Princeton in size and it was located on an Interstate. Expected a town of hills and trees. Rural community with friendly people.

An old quaint city bordering I-57. Primarily served by main artery highway 50. Older homes in old restored area of town. Pictured a downtown business district with a wide variety of stores and shops, small cafes, tearooms and small restaurants.

I expected to find similar type of area as Princeton.

Drove by Salem on I57 for many years driving to Kentucky Lake and always felt it must have a lot of activity.

2. APPROACHING THE COMMUNITY, WHAT DO YOU NOTICE FIRST?
(EVALUATE EACH ENTRANCE.)

POSITIVE: Coming off Interstate looked busy. Nice strip Mall updated stores i.e. Judy's, Radio Shack - need better parking lot and cleaned-up store fronts.

Chamber Welcome Sign was impressive on the Interstate and smaller welcome sign as approaching city was impressive, too.

The Interstate exit looks very progressive. Everything seems new and well kept out there. If I were a traveler with time to kill I may venture further in search of something else to see.

Busy, clean, modern businesses coming from the West. Entrance from East was clean and looked like most small towns. From the North passing the park, high school, and hospital gave the impression of a community with a lot to offer.

NEGATIVE: When exiting from the Interstate there isn't a sign that invites you to see the town (historical sites, parks, etc). Only 3 billboards/signs coming south on **57**.

Welcome sign off 50 lacks enthusiasm, South on 37 looks junky - Strip Mall empty. Welcome sign is hard to see.

A significant shortage of signs from all directions regarding stores, shops, food, lodging and especially historical sites, parks and community activities. Lack of collage of Civic Organizations signs at edge of city ie: Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, etc. Hard to find Hospital sign when approaching city from Interstate.

The South entrance was a definite turn off. Buildings were not well maintained. The City sign was extremely hard to see and needs a better backdrop.

3. AS YOU DRIVE AROUND TOWN YOUR COMMENTS ON:

A. Appearance

1. Downtown

Rundown, unattractive storefronts, Monkey store needs to go. Speckles was the only draw. Businesses should take better care of storefront sidewalks.

Moderately clean (room for improvement).

Looks pretty good. Did notice some buildings that could have a lot of History. The City Hall was very well kept, but thought it could have been lit up at night to show it's splendor. Not to many empty buildings.

Many of the buildings were very old and in need of updating.

2. Residential

The subdivisions were nice, except Country Club Estates. It seemed crowded and was right next to a Dairy Farm. The houses around the Memorial Park were well kept. Of course there were a few that were in dire need of repair throughout the city.

Some areas need some major clean up. Others just minor tidy activity.

Small homes. Hillcrest and Lakeshore areas were nice. Very decorative to holiday happenings. (Halloween).

Homes overall were well maintained in most of the town but many years ago the city "goofed" with it's zoning set-backs. Homes in many areas are just too close to the street.

3. Industrial park

Not officially open yet.

New - looks exciting
Old - Industry spread out all over the city.

Noticed room for expansion, well kept. Improving roads out there. Close to Interstate for easy access.

Busy area West of town with what appears to be very active.

4. Parks

Memorial Park very nice. We had to stop and see the 215 year old stump. Plenty of pavilions. No sign on 50 to tell us where it was, however.

Basically great setting but could use some minor repairs of culverts and accessories.

Nice park north of town - needs to have some clean **up** to make the park a very positive asset to the town.

5. Schools

High school and Elementary schools appeared to be in fine shape (exterior) - old school building boarded up looks bad - the Activity Center appearance could be improved.

High School was extremely nice.

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

Parking lot at Shopping Center needed to be repaved or blacktopped.

Banners were nice downtown, sidewalks need some repair.

7. Other

Setback of homes from street needs attention. Deteriorated sections of town with old buildings need the attention of the Zoning committee and some condemned on activity to be enforced. Local traffic problem needs to be addressed.

The town is full of beautiful trees.

B. Signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

Off Interstate 57 South, Chamber Sign is very noticeable. No signs after exiting Interstate to draw you into the community. Welcome Salem sign, East Entrance not very good. Looking like it was missing something.

1-57 signs (excellent). Inside city Welcome signs need to be larger.

Put a backdrop on the sign on 37 South and flowers on one on 37 N.

Interstate 57 signs were new and fresh with good impression. Salem City sign East needs to be updated. North and South were excellent except needs a back drop (fence or shrub) to stand out better.

2. Streets

Relatively good.

OK

Main roads were good - side roads were narrow in most areas.

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

Signage needed for Hospital, Parks, Schools, Activity Center and even a directional sign for Chamber to help visitors locate it.

Good sign on the off ramp for National Park.

The airport signs were hard to find.

4. Storefront signs

Judy's at the Strip Mall needs a sign on her window or under the overhang.

Good - Could use some renewal

Out at Strip Mall it was hard to tell which store was which while walking.

5. Industrial Park

New Industrial Park sign should be much larger and an announcement on it to explain the brand new industry that is expected to begin building in early '93.

Good, but as we got off the Interstate didn't know which direction to go for Industrial Park.

6. City Hall, police, etc.

I didn't see a sign for Police or Fire Station. City Hall - good.

Could be larger. Outside of building could be sand blasted and lit up at night.

Good - the City Hall was very unique.

7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

A little cluttered coming off Interstate.

Evidence of no billboard advertising on Banks, Stores, Shops, etc. Did notice billboard advertising on Centralia and Mount Vernon businesses in Salem.

Days Inn - Dennys - Lefthand read just south of Effingham 39 miles. Chamber Sign - Blue and White very nice going south on 57.

4. VISITOR/COMMUNITY INFORMATION

A. City/Village Hall

1. Is there a street map?

Yes, City Hall had the Welcome packet that the Chamber had given us.

Adequate

Yes, nice size.

2. Community brochure/directory

Looked good, directory of chamber members was good.

The Guide to Salem was very nice. Adequate information with what the Motel had and what we picked up at the Chamber Office and other stores we visited.

Sufficient.

The four-color brochure is **"outstanding"**.

3. Community profile (including business and industrial opportunities)

Excellent and up-to-date

Good

Nicely Done, **"Salem the Spirit and Space"** is beautiful.

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

All nicely done.

Everyone was very friendly and helpful.

OK, the one Deli should be open for breakfast.

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

Yes - good referral system.

City Manager was very informed.

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

One postcard from Motel

No bookmarkers, coupons, etc.

Gift from City Hall

B. Chamber office/visitor info center

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

Forgot to ask about Chamber Office but was very easy to find.

Visible from Main St.

Excellent.

Yes. Nice clean office.

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

Sufficient

Very Good

All Great Stuff

Stopped at City Hall and received a great deal of cooperation from City Clerk and Manager. The City Manager knew a great deal about the City. I was impressed.

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

Nice listing in office. Asking store personnel they seemed very friendly.

Excellent

4. How prepared/helpful were they?

Very

Excellent - Several persons interviewed proved their residents knew of the Chamber, its location and its function. Agreed it had a good working relationship with the city.

We didn't find anyone who had been to museum.

5. Convenient hours?

Unknown.

Fine - should arrange to cover the office full day and 5 days per week with personnel. Good recording backup.

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

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

a. Fine

b. Knew their individual store histories.

c. City Manager - very informed nicely took his time to answer all questions.

d. Spoke to several who hadn't been to Museum,

2. Did they refer you to someone else who could help?
 - a. Women at Speckles referred us to restaurants.
 - b. Women at ladies clothing store downtown referred me out of town for something she didn't carry.
 - c. Referred us to Days Inn for entertainment at night and to Austins for dinner.

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

- a. Friendly
- b. Pine Cone shop was messy - lady working in sweats not inviting.
- c. Deli was interesting.
- d. Everyone seems proud of their city.
- e. As most towns, some of the buildings should be torn 'down.
- f. The Pet Shop downtown should be closed.

4. Other comments

- a. The Pet Store is AWFUL!
- b. Downtown businesses seemed to be slow that day, but there is alot of traffic driving through,

5. GENERAL

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

Yes.

Yes, and eager to tell of the town's history and state of the City. They were also quick to say how anxious they are to expand and develop industry.

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

Enough. Shoes and women's clothing might need some attention.

Lots of motels. Downtown retail was limited in variety.

Most services in the community appear to be available. Ample lodging but not updated as I would expect close to interstate.

C. Are there public restrooms.

Courthouse and Chamber Office.

Parks only - City needs some in business district.

Didn't see any.

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

Yes - one not working - one no phone book.

Phone on Courthouse square wasn't working and seemed dirty to touch as did the one at the Strip Mall by the Drug Store.

Downtown by Court House - no phone book.

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

No

Yes - great potential

Looks attractive, but not too much action.

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

The Deli has wonderful Cinnamon Rolls.

Good

Deli had great homemade items. Denny's and Austins were OK.

G. What does community SMELL like?

No Offensive smells other than Pet Store.

OK

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

Lots of traffic, children, trucks, trains, healthy sounds.

Trucks and Trains

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

Rural, friendly, strangers spoke to us on the street.

Very warm and friendly

People were very friendly at every stop.

DESCRIBE THE PEOPLE YOU MET (FRIENDLY, HELPFUL, ETC.)

Friendly, willing to talk about their town, all seemed proud to be a part of Salem. The City Manager and Lowell at A Plus Realty went out of their way to help us.

The persons I came in contact with in Salem were neat, clean professional and extraordinarily friendly and helpful. They knew the basic history of the community and showed it freely - Oil Gypsies etc. Proud of their events, fairs, festivals and activities. (Need a major one for the chamber) All directions given were accurate and helpful.

Stopped in the downtown Deli and had breakfast. The waitress was extremely helpful and friendly. The two ladies in the Men's Store were very helpful and friendly. Went to A Plus Realty. Talked to Lowell Phelps and was treated very well and supplied with a great deal of information about the city.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

Salem is a town with potential. Put some money into downtown beautification. Have promotions that utilize your downtown i.e. Harvest Days, Spring Fling, Baseball Days that promote business downtown. Work on getting new retail downtown. Promote your history and your beautiful park on the highway. Use all your assets to their fullest.

The Downtown could use some work, With the traffic that drives through there it seems like there should be a way to get these people to stop to shop or eat. Not many empty buildings, though. That's good. You need to try to draw the people that get off of the interstate into the city.

Several people eager to try new things to bring attention to their community and move it forward.

City level, Chamber level and Business level has a great nucleus to get progressive.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SIX MONTHS FROM NOW:

The great potential the community has and the fine base of cooperation from which to work to move the community forward,

Trees, the Park, the friendly people. THE PET STORE (on a negative note.)

The deceptive practices we used to gain information from the beautiful City Hall, We had a good time!

6. DOING IT RIGHT!

- 1.) William Jennings Bryan Park.
Not very many empty buildings downtown.
Chamber Welcome Sign out on Interstate.
- 2.) Outstanding Parks.
Quality of life Book,
The Park (Memorial Park) very nice.
- 3.) Community Guide. (Should be printed two times a year)
Friendly People.
The Chamber sign on the interstate.
- 4.) Salem Guide.
City Hall.
Excellent Chamber Office and competent staff to help
move community forward.

5.) Nice looking schools.
The Proud, friendly people.
Great potential of natural city resources.

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. Community Guide
- B. Night Golf Tournament
- C. Bosses and Secretary of the Year recognition.

The Guide to Salem -

1. I will get the price to print this type of publication.
2. Show it around to get others responses.
3. Show it to City Tourism Board.
4. See if the Newspaper would publish it and obtain the ads.

The Salem Guide -

Get prices from local paper to produce one in Spring and Fall.