

First impressions

of

Spring Green, WI

by Cassville, WI

Visit conducted 10/15/91

A program for community improvement

Developed by:

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REPORT INTRODUCTION

The First Impressions visit of Spring Green by Cassville was conducted on Tuesday, October 15, 1991.

The four member Cassville team profile:

Three men, one woman;

One retired, one business person, one tourism coordinator, and one is involved in education;

Three are currently of working age and actively employed;

Combination of one life-long resident and three "moved to the area".

The weather was cool, but pleasant when we arrived around 10:30 a.m.

We toured the community as individuals, in groups of two, and as a total group. There was some overlap of places visited, but not, completely. We conducted a "windshield" inspection of the community as well as a walking tour of the business district.

The visitation team was probably most impressed with the quality of the various economic development efforts in Spring Green. That would include the industrial park, the businesses and services, and the tourism enterprises. While most of the team was aware of the fact that Spring Green had been promoting tourism, none of us were aware of the substantial industrial development in the industrial park. Spring Green appears to have taken that development for granted and/or has chosen not to promote further industrial development.

The following pages provide a composite of the four individual reports. If further explanation is required on any of these, I invite you to contact me at (608) 723-2125.

It was a pleasure visiting your community. We learned a great deal by visiting your most successful community.

Andrew B. Lewis
Grant County Resource Development Agent
UW-Extension

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

I thought of Spring Green as a community that was actively promoting tourism and was in close proximity to a number of tourism attractions such as the Lower Wisconsin River, Taliesin, the Frank Lloyd Wright buildings, and the House on the Rock.

I expected a small Wisconsin town with little commercial activity--the community you went through on the way to House on the Rock and Taliesin.

The town near House on the Rock and near the new resort complex being developed.

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

Positive:

Most of the entrances had nice signing.

The "tin man" at Tri-County Heating always attracts my attention.

From the south, good signing and attractive golf course; from the north, flat farm land--not impressive.

Beautiful rolling hills; Wisconsin River; Frank Lloyd Wright home and school.

Beautiful hills; Wisconsin River.

Scenic beauty.

Negative:

Retail development along Hwy. 14 appears cluttered and unplanned.

The ribbons attached to both welcome signs appeared tattered and faded.

North entrance passing the school complex led to some jarring aluminum painted buildings stretching from the tracks to the corner of Wood and Main Streets. South entrance--dilapidated small house across from chamber.

No hunting and trespassing signs everywhere.

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

A. **Appearance**

1. **Downtown**

The cornhusks and other decorations on main street for the fall season added a festive touch.

Most of the stores had attractive facades, signing, and awnings.

The Frank Lloyd Wright architecture of the Valley Bank is an impressive attraction in itself.

Impressed with the new (or apparently new) Jefferson Plaza.

The main street had a few strategically located benches and the Lions have maintained some attractive looking trash receptacles.

The lot and building next to the building next to the Village Tavern was in poor repair (grass growing between the cracks).

There was one pile of trash next to a poorly kept trash receptacle that said "Keep Spring Green 'Green'".

There was an attractive building which once housed a business which I believe as called Carpe Diem. This building had hundreds of Spring Green vacation guides littered all over the front deck (they had been there for some time).

I liked the appearance of the Lexington Station area--very well done.

Huttman's Mens Clothing Store had a very nice store display.

A larger downtown than expected, clean and attractive. Signs were present, but not intrusive.

Post House is a fine historic building, but the Parlor Tavern and Gard Theatre adjoining are in need. of repair and renovation. Remove fake front.

Home News building needed. their vegetation trimmed.

The cornstalks were an interesting fall touch.

The Valley Bank was the gem of downtown.

Stores well stocked with quality merchandise.

Impressive number and quality of small businesses. Streets and sidewalks well kept.

Bar on corner did not look good.

2. Residential

I felt that there was a good mix of new and well-preserved, older housing stock. There were, however, a number of historically significant homes in the Spring Green area that could use a great deal of fixing up.

What is the residential area doing in the industrial park?

There were a number of buildings on Wood Street approximately across from George's Auto Shop that were in poor condition. These included an old cement block building with lots of cars in poor condition and some quonset huts in poor condition at the corner of Wood and Madison Streets. Both areas were unattractive and appeared to be in a strange location. Are these used for business purposes?

A good mix of old and new housing. Some restorable homes were noted, but not too much disrepair.

Very nicely kept, homes

Surprised at the number of relatively new homes.

3. Industrial park

I think the entire visitation team was impressed and surprised to find Cardinal Industries and the other businesses located in the industrial park."

The industrial park could likely use some additional signing so that people can find it.

We didn't know what the signs stating Cardinal CG and Cardinal IG meant. We were surprised to find a number of people that new that it stood for insulated glass and coated glass.

Most of the buildings appeared to be very new or well-kept; in the industrial park.

The clerk at the FS gas station was well-informed about the industrial park and stated that Cardinal was "the best thing that ever happened to Spring Green."

No sign indicating the industrial area. Contained a grouping of well-maintained commercial buildings.

Very good layout and plenty of room for expansion.
Business signs could be more informative.

No clue for a stranger in town to know what "Cardinal-"
manufactures.

4. Parks

The park at the end of a dead-end street next to the golf
course appears to be relatively new and well organized.

The tennis courts, picnic shelters, and ball diamond were
very nice. The park, however, could use some directional
signing to let people know it, is there.

Does the community promote Shot Tower State Park?

A golf course and tennis courts were found.

5. Schools

We were very impressed with the school infrastructure.

The River Valley High School appeared to be well-kept and
nice looking.

The athletic facilities were in good repair and it appeared
as though there were new lights and a new scoreboard on the
athletic field.

The new elementary school was very well done and it was
nice to see all of the schools located in the same area.

It appeared a bit odd that the district office building was
larger than the school. We assumed that this was the old
elementary school.

The signs in front of the school did not have any events
advertised and were empty.

We were impressed with the fact that there is a River
Valley school forest on the edge of town (can this be used
by the public?).

The school complex and athletic field presented a picture
of efficient and well-kept schools.

Very nice schools and football field--well maintained.

Efficiently laid out.

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

With a few exceptions, the sidewalks, streets, and lighting appeared to be adequate and well-kept.

Infrastructure seemed in good repair. Some downtown side streets had narrow sidewalks. Most were in very good condition. Some residential walks did need weeding.

7. Other

The Art Gallery is a positive addition to the downtown.

Wood and Madison buildings needed work, or at least paint.

Trash at the corner of Washington and Jefferson Streets.

B. Signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

The community appears to be well signed from all directions.

The "Welcome to Spring Green" sign just off Hwy. 14 on Hwy. 23 is strangely situated.. It is facing toward the field rather than the road. As noted earlier, the attached ribbons appeared to be tattered and faded.

The south entrance sign was readable and attractive.

The north entrance sign was parallel to the road and hard to read.

Nice simple design.

2. Streets

Streets appeared to be adequate.

The streets were all well marked and in good condition.

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

Very little signing that would direct one to these facilities.

There was a green informational sign noting the business district.

The community might consider adding some aesthetically pleasing directional signs to their public facilities.

The community does a good job of signing off-street, parking. Both off-street and on-street parking signs were excellent,.

No signs to park or hospital were noted.

Could have had Wisconsin River landing marked better.

4. Storefront signs

There were both good and bad examples of business signing. I liked some of the signs, such as the Copper Penney Cafe sign.

For the most part, the businesses on Lexington street do not have signs that are visible from the Main Street {except the sign for the Singer business which was ugly and also didn't identify the variety offered by that store}.

I liked the sign at Hardware Hank.

Signs blended with the architecture with no glaring examples.

Most signs were very good, but several signs did not fit well with the old-time flavor.

There was no sign at industrial park--should have one.

5. Industrial park

No sign--should have one.

6. City Hall, police, etc.

The public library/village hall was signed, but could be improved.

The city hall was located behind the library. Had to look for it.

Could have been better.

Appeared to be really cramped for space.

7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

Did not notice any "eye sores". An attractive sign could be designed that, would better direct, people to the main street area.

Most seemed in good taste.

The chamber sign was not, impressive, a bit amateurish.

OK.

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

A. City/Village Hall

1. Is there a street map? (Yes)

We were given a copy of the Spring Green Traveler which had a small, but sufficient map on page 17.

2. Community brochure/directory

The Spring Green 1991 Traveler was distributed by a number of businesses, tourist information, and city hall. We also received a useful vacation guide and map from the local newspaper, however, these weren't available at the local businesses or the information area.

Several of the businesses like the Wisconsin Artists' Showcase and the chamber office had sign-in books and told us that we would receive information on the community.

The Spring Green Traveler was very informative and complete.

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

When we visited the village hall. to request information on the industrial park and community, we were told by a woman that we needed to talk to Peggy, but she was very busy. Instead of getting our name or telling us when she might be available, she asked us to come back at a later time. She also didn't have any written information for us to review while we were waiting. Needless to say, we didn't come back.

Very nice small town atmosphere with good possibilities for tourism and business ventures.

The village hall/library/police was a disappointment for a town with a seemingly strong economic base. The office was crowded with little **space** for brochures, directories or street maps. Some information **was** available, hut we should have been directed to the chamber for more complete information.

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

Hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts could have been better marked.

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

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

I received some very attractive (free) postcards from the Wisconsin Artists' Showcase. I also received some free postcards from the Valley Bank.

Postcards from Valley Bank.

B. **Chamber office/visitor info center**

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

The tourist information center at the Winsted Shop was strategically located on Hwy. 23 and well signed. Everybody we asked knew its location.

We were told about another tourist information center outside of town, formerly part of the Euro Actividade project.

Virgil and Helen Steele were very informed **about** the community, Taliesin, Euro Actividade, restaurants, accommodations, etc. They provided us with some very good Written information and were enthusiastic about their community. Every community needs some promoters like Virgil and Helen. The Steeles provided us with a wealth of information on restaurants and overnight accommodations. The Steeles also had menus for the local restaurants which they shared with us--an idea we should definitely "steal".

Right on main entrance good. Easy to locate and residents knew its location.

Good condition--well signed.

Very nice people who were well informed.

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

A comprehensive amount of information was available on the town and surrounding area.

Nice map.

Found the vacation guide and map publication at the Home News Office when looking for a local newspaper. Did not see it elsewhere.

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

The information was present with the excellent idea, to have in the rack, menus from local restaurants.

Several nice places.

4. **How prepared/helpful were they,**

The Steele's were obviously very prepared and helpful.

Very knowledgeable and willing to share--very friendly.

5. **Convenient hours?**

We forgot to notice the hours. An alternate site (for instance a late night gas station) could, perhaps be used as an alternate site during off hours. Visitors often arrive in a community during non-business hours.

Yes.

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

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

- a. Most of the people in the community appeared to be very knowledgeable about the community. Most, notable was the artist who provided me with an informative tour at the Wisconsin Artists' Showcase. He was very helpful. He explained the history of the building, the various artists, and the shows they were involved with. He talked about the tourism business. He provided me with information on the community and tried his best to get me to sign the visitor's book when he found out I was interested in locating a wood products business in the Spring Green area. (great, job!).

- b. The clerk at the FS gas station was also enthusiastic and informed about the community.
- c. The waitresses at the Dutch Kitchen and Country Hearth were also friendly and informative. The host at the Dutch Kitchen also provided us with some interesting history on the community and knew what the CG and IG stood for at the Cardinal businesses.
- d. Persons asked information or directions were **eager** to help, knew the answers and were very friendly.
- e. Most, were very friendly, but did not, know **age** or history of the town and surrounding **area**.
- f. Well informed **about**, industry.

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

- a. People in the community had a difficult time coming up with a contact person for the industrial park.
- b. Most people knew the location of the chamber office and provided us with directions.
- c. No need.

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

- a. **Most**, everyone would say hello when we met them on the street. Even the police officer at the village hall greeted us with a friendly "hi guys".
- b. The attitude of everyone I **spoke** with was positive.
- c. The woman at %he village hall was a bit cold.
- d. Friendly and **outgoing**.
- e. Generally well dressed..
- f. Pleasant.

4. Other comments

- a. Although the waitress at the Country Hearth was friendly and informative, she forgot my sweet roll!

- b. The sales clerk at Hardware Hank was very helpful and friendly and recommended several places to eat. When I asked her about turkey hunting she provided me with a great deal of information on hunting opportunities in the area.
- c. Should publish a brochure on local history and point out local landmarks.

5. General

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

The artist at the Wisconsin Artists' Showcase and the Steeles were most informed about the history and community events.

The menu at the Dutch Kitchen had a good history account, on the back of the menu.

One of the tellers at the bank provided some interesting history on the architecture of the Valley Bank.

The salesperson at the Country Sampler didn't know the location of the village hall. She noted that there really isn't one--you must mean the police station.

All seemed to have a grasp of their community and surrounding area.

Most didn't know age of town or much of the area's history.

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

Although I knew Spring Green to be a "tourist" community, I was most impressed with the services that were available. I couldn't believe that Spring Green had the River Valley Medical Clinic, chiropractor, an optometrist, a dentist, pharmacy, several banks, and a variety of retail. The new medical center and the retail mix were exceptionally impressive.

Spring Green should be marketing itself as a retirement community. They have both the amenities and the services needed for a retirement community.

We were impressed with the fact that Spring Green had a senior center with a Greyhound bus stop.

The Greenway Manor Nursing Home and T.L.C. Child Care.

The area had a good mix; very impressive for size of town.

C. Are there public restrooms?

Very nice public restrooms in the new Jefferson Plaza.

None not-ed. Interesting graffiti in one **business** facility, however.

Well marked and well kept.

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

Payphones were offered at both Jefferson Plaza. and next to the public bench on main street.

Easily accessible.

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

The industrial park was very attractive with some quality tenants. Was a little disturbed about the mix of uses in the industrial park. Uses included a bowling alley, professional building (engineering), industry, and residential. I am not sure that these uses are complementary.

Bustling and prosperous would be two more adjectives to add.

Very good.

Attractive and active.

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

I didn't get to taste the sweet roll I ordered at Country Hearth (I didn't, receive it).

The cherry torte at the Post House was excellent, however, the service was slow and the special (chicken and biscuits) was cold. (Liked the outside garden--very nice.)

I liked the fact that the waitress at the Dutch Kitchen/Post House didn't complain about separate checks.

Nothing exceptional.

G. What, does community SMELL like?

Some very nice food smells at the Post House. Otherwise, no other smells stuck in my mind either positive or negative.

Fresh country air.

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

The community appeared to be very active for a day in the middle of the week. There were a number of tourists including a motorcoach.

I liked the old creaking wooden floors at the hardware store.

Just traffic--train did not appear!

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

Although it was a cool, windy day, one easily received a warm, emotional response while visiting the community.

I got a nice feeling while visiting the Country Sampler store which had a variety of smells and unique gifts. Rather pricey, but very nice.

A friendly, busy community with the charm of a small town still retained.

Very warm small town--inviting.

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

Well dressed, very personable, and helpful.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

The Razzberries Store that had gone out of business was attractive. I liked the old tin ceiling. The community needs to work on filling this business.

The Lexington Station area also appears to be very well done and the community needs to work on occupying a few of the vacant building in that area.

Winter Green should be marked better and be open year round. Very scenic view.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SIX MONTHS FROM NOW

The fact that Spring Green is so close to the Lower Wisconsin River and yet appears to be isolated from the River.

The impressive industrial park, which I didn't, know existed.

The tin man at Tri-County Heating.

The variety of services offered by the community.

The architecture and interior of the Valley Rank of Spring Green.

Beautiful wooded hills, excellent attractions, full range of stores.

The Spring Golf Course (since this report I've golfed there and it is a truly beautiful course).

Neat, progressive, growing village.

6. *Doing it Right!*

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

1. Quality and quantity of services (health, child care, senior citizen center, retirement home, etc.).
2. The proximity to quality tourism attractions such as The American Players Theatre, House on the Rock, Shot Tower State Park, the Lower Wisconsin River. Excellent geographical location with major highways and scenic beauty.
3. The quality of the information we received. at the Winsted Shop.
4. The very interesting Wisconsin Artists' Showcase,
5. The general appearance of Main Street. A busy downtown with well-stocked stores. Full range of stores for shopping. Attractive stores. Very nice industrial park.
6. A strong industrial base. Restoration of the older buildings. New home construction.
7. New housing in construction. Excellent tourism sites in place (parks, golf, skiing, Wright houses). Scenic beauty of surrounding area.

8. A variety of restaurants as to kind and price.
9. Attractive residential areas. Good restaurants and friendly people.

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!

We liked the idea of having restaurant menus at the tourist information center.

Whatever we can do to attract new business to our area.