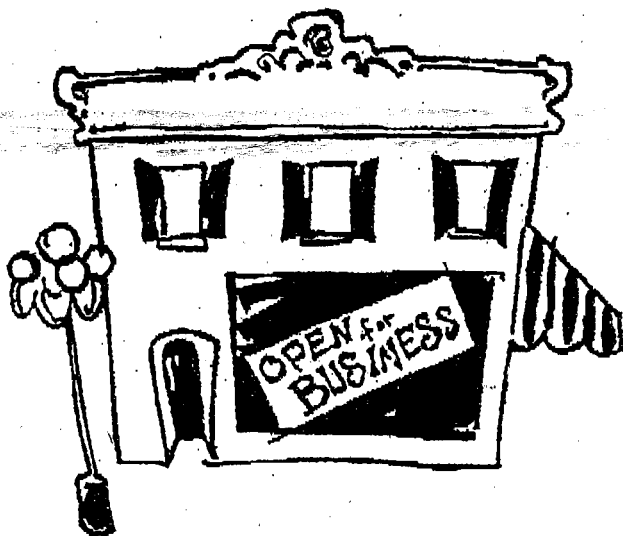


First Impressions

A program for community improvement



Community Tomah (Received only a poor quality fax copy!)

Date 11/13/98

As you approach the community

1. What was my perception before visiting? What did I expect?

- I had only driven **through** Tomah briefly **several years** before **and did** not know *what* to expect
- -As we ate visiting communities of *equally* size, it becomes **a matter** of comparisons. Each place in which one **drives through to get** somewhere else. As I was not aware of Tomah's make-up **and** economic base, I had more curiosity **than** expectations.
- **Community on interstate** - Prime industry = **cranberries** - bustling, **good business town** - **country town** as my father talked of Tomah years ago expected nice, neat and picket fence town,

II, The "five minute" impression:

Take one drive through the community without stopping. As you exit the community, pull over to the road and write down what you felt about the town with only this quick look. Do this in silence with the others in your group for this part.

- Driving in the city **looked** old with many of the Store fronts closed and the train **track area** middle of the city made **a bad impression** because it was run down and dirty. The North side looked nice as well as the industrial park they looked **clean and** productive.
- The wide double **highway entrances** were pleasing, going through areas dotted with national businesses, with their mandated neatness, as well "junky" areas, it resembles "anywhere" identify the community as somewhere different - pleasant small town "Americana"
- Hit some of the worse areas on **first** tour, not so well kept homes, weedy areas, junky area hut in p.m. found the nice neat and pleasant areas.

As you "drive" around town:

You now divide into your teams: one team will drive the town for about an hour while the other hoof it and start visiting businesses, city hall, etc. After lunch the teams will switch roles so every chance to drive the community and to personally walk into stores and visit with people.

III. Driving - evaluate EACH entrance.

Go about 1/2 - 1 mile out each road and return. List each road (61 North, etc.) and list positive and negative about each.

- Entering from *the South* Hwy 12- 16 there is not too much welcoming you into town. So houses looked pretty run down. Entering from the East Hwy 12 looked ok but the North **looked empty missing an anchor** store. Entering from the West on Hwy 12 looked nice houses kept up and clean.
- Positives
 - **Vets hospital**
 - Nice neighborhoods
 - School
 - Hospital
 - Wonderful, lake - **Oh, how I wish I lived on it!**
 - Apts, condos, townhouses
 - Fairgrounds

- Mall area
- College - WWTC
- Burnstads
- Toro Co. - impressive
- **Negatives**
 - Unkept entrances and some residential
 - Depot area - downtown
 - Some business fronts
 - Industrial park not kept well
 - Bad streets
 - Infrastructure need of repair

IV.(a) Driving ...evaluate the downtown business area: (Signs, appearance, size,

- The downtown business *district* looked clean, noticed a lot of empty store fronts.
- As evidence that Tomah is primarily an industrially based community, the downtown area made any effort to retain, or restore or capitalize on the architecture of its retail buildings more than 100 years old - especially the second stories. Try to have more cohesive appearance. District is surprising by large. No food supermarkets? Bars a plenty.
- Need of repair and refurbish. Needs a sprucing up. **Good mix of stores - no food downtown**
Customer service - Best I have had in a long time.

(b) Driving...evaluate other business area.

- Between, the downtown to the East side on the train tracks looked rundown and dirty. Town Center mall looked but missing the anchor store.
- Northtowne Center inviting and pleasant to visit. Personnel friendly in all places visited to note a large sign: Pawn Shop! Burnstad's must draw people from great distances.
- Mall - needs fill

V. Driving ...comments on residential:

- The residential area on the north side of town looked nice, there were many apartments and noticed many of the houses around the downtown area needed maintenance.
- From what we saw, most housing is in single homes of greatly varied architecture of both economic scale - neither extreme. Fortunate or not, there is no great residential building to be discernible. Northtown Apts, condos and townhouses around Tomah Lake and medical center attractive. No consistency in a sidewalk program-
- Some poor to b3d - not kept. Numerous good to excellent. Nicely kept.

VI. Driving...comments on:

a. street signs

- The street signs looked ok, it was hard to find the Chamber (only one sign) -
- Visible. Some communities are replacing white on green. No sign identifying river.
- Some hard to see or find.

b. traffic patterns/street conditions

- The traffic was not heavy and looked well routed
- The traffic was not heavy, presented no problems. Most street seemed to be in good condition
- Streets need of repair in areas.

c. welcome signs (at entrances)

- There was only one welcome sign that I saw, it was nice but did not see it until the mid
- Liked the Tomah Welcome To Cranberry Country sign. How many these are, I don't know could be larger and more dominant. I was saddened by the faded Gasoline Alley signs strip should be recognized more for its uniqueness, as well as developed into promotional getter.
- Cranberry country (great signs)

d. direction signs to parks, schools, hospitals/clinics, attractions, services (i.e. police), etc.

- There were a few signs to locate important areas. They were kept up but not very numerous
- There is a need for directional signs for the Chamber of Commerce that is usually the one seeking other directions. Did not notice many other directional signs. The map from Chamber our best guide.
- Better signed to major players. Chamber hard to find. But wonderful signs at Casey's are good.

VII. Driving -- comments on industrial park/area: Sign well defined., busy. a .g. new...etc.

- Most of the industrial park looked well kept up and busy, it looked like it was expanding
- Greatly impressed by industrial park - large Cardinal Glass and Toro. Noticed WI Job Center Western College, etc. Fortunate that the Industrial Park has room to expand and should not be surrendered to other purposes. Noticed new housing near by.
- Not well kept. But impressed with Toro, Cardinal. College - weeds, clutter in areas.

VIII. Driving...comments on schools:

- The schools looked out-dated and kids were running around very close to the street by (I think school)
- Saw two of the schools - no specific comment.
- Schools looked adequate from the outside.

IX. Driving...comments on parks, play grounds, athletic facilities, etc. :

- The parks looked well kept up. We arrived pretty late in the season so many of the extras were for the winter.
- Visited parks that were very nice in a traditional way. The fairgrounds interested us and info of National Truck Pull. Gazebo in park was attractive.
- a Parks seemed nice. Fairgrounds good. Recognized your site of National Truck Pull.

X. Driving...comments on other:

a. hospitals/clinics

- Hospital was one of the nicest parts of town. It looked new and in a great location.
- Very attractive area and buildings,
- Very nice - a real addition to your town, neat setting on lake,

b. billboards/advertising

- The billboard and advertising was run over bearing.
- Usual, as in other places, array and disarray of signs - probably a enforceable policy a should be enacted.
- As in every town - some great, some distract from the beauty.

c. Other

- There were quite a few condos which was nice, many of the residential houses were in needed repair.

XI. Walking around ...comments on businesses (physical part): Appearance, disigns, etc.

- The outside of the business downtown were ok, I noticed many of the storefronts empty and had cardboard signs that said they were out. The sidewalks looked clean and free of trash
- "Downtown" sidewalks in very good condition - surprisingly diverse stores - possible need very good restaurant to catch the travel going through - many other businesses would benefit store owner knew nothing about the history of the area - referred me to the Historical Society was closed - looked blank when I mentioned Chamber of Commerce as a source of info? - closed realty office pictures of good looking homes at reasonable prices, and also the new in very reasonable prices, a kudos to the community for affordable housing that is contrary other places that are responding to greed more than the need.
- Nice retail/ service mix. Some buildings need a face lift and a general sprucing up. Was nice with the friendly and informative sales people and front desk folks - this doesn't seem the anymore) all friendly - helpful and nice - great job in hiring the right people.

XII. Walking around ...comments on people: Were they friendly, did they know questions, did they try to help, appearance, etc.

- The service was nice in the businesses that were open. Quite a few businesses were not open
- I have found that people in other communities are as friendly as those visiting the area - many in Tomah, with a few bright, "Hello's" from strangers
- Helpful, friendly and ready to help with directions, etc.

XIII. Community information: comments on...

a. community brochure (tourist type)

- The printed material for the chamber is nice. The four small flyers Relax, Explore, Create Discover are wonderful. They are easy to grab and to read through. The design is also use of gradations on a toned paper makes good use of a one color print job.

- Very good

d. other (hours, appearance, locations, etc.)

- Architecture *very attractive* - good combination with museum
- Very attractive - nice to have museum with it.

XVI. Other stuff.....

a. public restrooms (**available**, condition, etc.)

- Did not notice any public restrooms
- Now aware
- No public restrooms!!?? Found in supermarket and Burnstads', clean/nice.

b. payphones (working, phonebook intact, etc.)

- Did not notice any pay phones.
- Not aware
- Nothing stood out.

c. Parking

- Parking was not a problem but the downtown was not busy.
- Not aware
- Adequate where I went

d. water fountains, benches, etc.

- Not aware
- Didn't observe

e. other

- Everything downtown looked clean but it was empty.

WRAP UP

A. Using your "senses" ...

1. What does the community **TASTE** like? (Specialty bakery/restaurant, etc.)

- Burnstad's was a wonderful restaurant and the atmosphere was very cozy. I think that it highlights of the city.
- Burnstad's! Burnstad's! Wonderful food and atmosphere.
- Burnstad's - it's your jewel - it was so impressive I brought my wife back the following eat and shop and we'll be back again.

2. What does the community **SMELL** like:

- There is not distinct smell to the city.
- Devoid of any adverse smells,
- Nothing bad

3. What **SOUNDS** did you hear?

- The noise was not disturbing.
- As it is a trucking center, many highways and industry, some sounds of trucks - not obtrusive maybe it was the hour and the day, but it was very quiet, few people.