

**First Impressions Evaluation of Waupaca, WI by Berlin, WI**  
**June 2003**  
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\*A revised and updated version of the *First Impressions* program developed by Andrew Lewis and James Schneider, 1991

# First Impressions Revisited: A Program for Community Assessment & Improvement Final Report

Community You Visited (City and State): Waupaca

## Visitation Team Profile:

Name1: Dusty Walker  
Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of visit and time spent: June 5, 2003  
Weather on date of visit: Cloudy and warm

Name2: Peggy Ellis  
Age: 60 Gender: F Occupation: Resort Owner  
Address: 484 E. Bay Court  
Phone #: 920-294-6605 E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of visit and time spent: June 5, 2003  
Weather on date of visit: Sunny, great day

Name3: Carol Trampf  
Age: 59 Gender: F Occupation: Chamber/BID Director  
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Phone #: 920-361-3636 E-Mail: berlinc@vbe.com  
Date of visit and time spent: June 5, 2003 / 10 am-3 pm  
Weather on date of visit: Nice, 70°

Name4: \_\_\_\_\_  
Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of visit and time spent: \_\_\_\_\_  
Weather on date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Name5: \_\_\_\_\_  
Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of visit and time spent: \_\_\_\_\_  
Weather on date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Prior to Your Visit

*How easy was it to get information on the community that you are visiting?*

- A phone call and it was here in a couple of days
- Another person received this information.
- Very easy
- Waupaca: a resort/tourist area. A small town surrounded by lakes for vacationing.

*Did it accurately reflect what you saw?*

- Yes

*Did the information arrive in a timely fashion?*

- Yes

*Did you have difficulties obtaining information on the community through a web search?*

- No

*What was the quality of information obtained from regional/state agencies and organizations?*

- I went on the web site, Dept. of Tourism and also for Waupaca and their web site; came up in both immediately.

## **2. Past Perceptions**

*What was your perception of the community before this visit? What did you expect to see?*

*Please comment on your knowledge of this community:*

- I had not been in Waupaca for years. I always liked it with the Chain of Lakes and resort area.
- Known to me as a vacation/resort community because of Chain of Lakes
- Chain of Lakes, vacation area
- I didn't know that much about Waupaca, only about the golf courses and being a resort town.

## **3. The “Five Minute” Impression**

*After taking a five-minute drive through the community, without stopping, the following reactions were noted:*

- Lots of traffic, bigger than I thought, great signage.
- Clean, quiet town, good mix of residential and retail.
- A very well kept city. The homes and yards cared for and many flowers and hosta. Signage for schools and hospital are too few. Signage for downtown facilities too small.
- A very clean community with lots of stores and shops. I couldn't find signs for the mall or golf course.

## **4. Community Entrances**

*The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances:*

*Approached from:*

- North exit and 54 West. Uniform street lights and a lot of shopping centers.
- Highway 10, 22-54, northeast.
- Hwys 22 and 45. Looked for hospital signage, did not see any. Nice signage to downtown.
- The entrance roads/highways into Waupaca were not as well marked as I would need. How about a “Welcome to Waupaca” sign? The entrance off Hwy. 49 needs better directional signs and something to make it safer for a left turn into the city. Oak St. leading out the foundry needs repair.
- The entrance to Waupaca wasn't marked properly. Had a hard time trying to decide which way to go and where to turn. Highway 49 needs a directional sign.

*Approached from:*

- I was driving and didn't write down name of exit. Industry and foundry.
- 54 from King from west. Good entrance, great street lighting on streets and parking lots all matching.
- Off Hwy. 49. No info to golf courses.

*Approached from:*

- Residential area and homes kept up very nicely, not many "For Sale" signs.

*Approached from \_\_\_\_\_:*

## **5. Downtown Business Area**

*Observations about the general appearance of the downtown area:*

- Main St. sidewalks are wide-wonderful! The variety of businesses from the lovely Market Place, lawyer office, children's shop, hardware store, antiques, church, hotel and city buildings all within walking distance is excellent. The café outside with music delightful.
- Very clean and many stores and places to choose from. Street signs are very nice and the banners are great! Lots of parking but a real hazard backing out.

*General Appearance of buildings, displays, signage:*

- Buildings are older but kept up well. Signage was great. Banners and signs all matched with the gazebo log.
- Buildings in good shape, well cared for.
- The blue and gold signs are great and can be easily read. Information signs can be a little further from the turn.
- My first impression was wow! How lovely and so many different shops and places to eat.

*The variety of shopping:*

- Seemed like there were more businesses, such as insurance companies and professional service businesses than retail. Visited specialty stores in King and a couple in downtown Waupaca.
- Downtown had a good mix of retail-commercial services.
- Nice variety of retail shops. Loved the friendly table and chairs in front of store.

*How would you rate the variety and quality of the merchandise?*

- Very nice – north woods variety.
- Nice mix and variety of items. Quality medium to high end.
- Merchandise nice, quality but pricier. Didn't like the hardware store cluttering sidewalk with used merchandise.

*What kind of customer service did you receive when you entered the retail businesses?*

- Most of the business people were very friendly and helpful when asked questions. Only 1 person (specialty shop) wasn't sure where the Chamber was. All stores were open except a place called Indian Crossing Casino. They have canoe rides, etc. Looked very run down. Also a bar was there; historical place.

- Greetings from most stores were very good. Friendly and genuine “hello’s.” Hours seemed adequate (not sure about evenings). Most seem to know community and things to do.
- I liked the signage of hours open. Clerks downtown didn’t ask if we needed help.
- Everyone we talked to was very friendly and helpful. Appearance of employees were very neat and quite professional.

*Were there any governmental or nonprofit organizational activities that might serve as a magnet for the shopping district?*

- City Hall was very impressive. Different offices were well marked. Bathrooms were open and well marked. Staff was informative.
- City Hall/Library excellent. Post Office and historical society located on the hill.

*Were there the following public amenities?*

*Pay phones (working with phonebook intact!):*

- Yes

*Drinking fountains:*

- Yes

*Benches:*

- Yes
- Nice in front of City Hall.

*Public restrooms:*

- Yes
- City Hall and Chamber office

*Appealing landscaping:*

- Yes
- Nice and neat.

*Did you have any difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?*

- Main St. is all angle parking. We parked and walked downtown. A lot of traffic and hard to back out of parking stall. A lot of parking because they angle park.
- Parking good. Can park downtown and walk easily their downtown area.
- Didn’t like the vertical parking. Hard to get in and out of traffic.
- Main street is clean and quiet in spite of rather heavy traffic. The angle parking allows for more spaces, but also becomes a dangerous situation when backing out. Handicap parking a great idea.
- Main St. wide, but angle parking especially with trucks and vans dangerous.
- Angle parking is great, but if you have a van, backing out is dangerous. Condition of street was very good.

## 6. Other Retail Shopping Areas (Big Box Retailers/Shopping Malls)

*What types of businesses did you notice that would fit the general category of “Big Box Retailer”?:*

- K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Pick ‘n Save, Piggly Wiggly, Fleet Farm, Strip Mall by King
- For a town of 5,600 I thought the area offered a large amount of services and a large variety of retail.
- K-Mart, strip malls. Poor signage to find them.

*General Appearance of buildings, displays signage:*

- Signage was good and all buildings seemed in good condition.
- Outer retail look very good and seemed quite new.
- Mostly nice appearance, few being remodeled.

*The variety of shopping:*

- Yes, more professional services than retail downtown. Great strip mall in King.
- Nice mix downtown. Poor direction to hospital and clinics.

*How would you rate the variety and quality of the merchandise?*

- As I said before, a lot of north woods type of merchandise. Quality was good and also a variety.
- King area – great shops. Pricing comparable to most resort areas.
- Marketplace downtown, nice selection of merchandise, candy, jelly, etc.

*What kind of customer service did you receive when you entered the retail businesses?*

- Most were very pleasant and when asked questions very informative and helpful. All stores were open when we arrived at 10:00 am.
- Very knowledgeable about the whole community/area, not just their town.
- Few asked to help me. But if I asked questions, were very helpful.

*Did you have any difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?*

- In King the road construction was very bad. We parked at a specialty shop and asked if we could leave our car there and they were very accommodating while we ate across the street. Should be better signage for road construction. We got on wrong side and had a terrible time getting back.
- Yes, we parked near chamber office and walked the downtown area.

## 7. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas

*Is there a defined area where manufacturing industries could easily locate/expand?*

- Yes, a very large industrial park.

*What did you find attractive about the potential locations for manufacturing/commercial businesses?*

- Street lights were all consistent and buildings kept up well.
- Many entrances to city, access to truck and trains.
- Industrial areas well marked, busy, but the road needs repair. Easy to find the foundry.

*How would you evaluate the general health of manufacturing businesses that are currently located in the community?*

- It is a very busy city and my feeling is that all is well.
- Mostly good shape. Waupaca Foundry was impressive.
- This area is well marked and well kept. The road to the foundry is poor. The smell from that area is awful.

*Could you find print information and information and informed persons that could provide you with data that would help you make an informed business location decision?*

- The Chamber office was very attractive. All staff was dressed nicely with name tags. One whole wall was full of brochures. Staff was very pleasant and informative.
- Yes, chamber was helpful as were realtors.

## **8. Health Care Services**

*Comment on the availability and apparent quality of hospitals and emergency medical services:*

- Hospital and medical center were well marked. A well mix of services.
- For the area there seemed to be a good amount of health services.
- Good signage on the complex. A healthcare mall with your complete needs.
- We couldn't find the hospital, the H signs should be closer together. Keep better signage. The facilities appear lovely and the location beautiful. Hospital/Clinic/School area very nice.
- Found an H sign, but quickly lost it. Found hospital by chance, when I did it was very nice and appearance pretty and appealing.

*Comment on the availability and condition of facilities for physician, dental, optometrist, and other medical care:*

- Nice mix near hospital

*What long-term care, assisted living, or nursing home facilities exist in the community?*

- Didn't see any.

## **9. Housing**

*How would you evaluate the existing mix of housing stock?*

- Older areas, the home seemed well cared for. Look like a fair amount of new building. Condo's and apartments especially.
- Nice new homes. The beautiful Victorian homes and saw a lot of rentals.
- Homes were maintained quite nicely and lots of beautiful hostas. Not many "for sale" signs – says something!

*Were there any indications that the housing market was depressed?*

- Very few "For Sale" signs. Houses and lawns were all well kept.
- Very few "For Sale" signs. Counted only 3 or 4.
- Well kept lawns.

*Were there any signs that it would be difficult to find acceptable housing?*

- Chamber, retailers and local papers had a lot of information.

*Does the local housing market have housing that would appeal to all income ranges? Are there sufficient rental properties for persons interested in building or simply living in the community prior to buying housing?*

- Homes were well maintained and it was so nice to NOT see signs posted in yards. I only saw 2 “For Sale” signs – remarkable!

## **10. Schools**

*Do the schools appear to be adequate in size or do you see the use of “temporary class rooms”? Are they well maintained? Please comment on the following:*

- Several schools in Waupaca all seem well maintained.
- For the size of the area, looked adequate.
- The schools need better signs. I’d miss the start of a game.
- I didn’t see many school signs. I would have a hard time making my grandkids games!
- I had a hard time finding the schools where is elementary? High School – watch for children signs, were easy to read.

*Pre-School/Kindergarten/Head Start/Day Care facilities:*

*Elementary School:*

- Large amount of elementary schools.

*Middle School/Junior High:*

- Very appealing.

*Higher Education (Community College, Technical College, University):*

*Were you able to find print information in the community that helped assess the quality of the educational system?*

- The Chamber sent in their packet a full brochure about schools.

## **11. Faith/Religion**

- A lot of churches; all denominations.

*Comment on the number of denominations represented in the community:*

*Comment on the physical appearance of the churches in the community:*

- All churches looked great.
- Saw several well maintained churches.

*Are there any signs of church-sponsored community services?*

*Are there any facilities or statements that some would view as intrusive or that would make someone feel uncomfortable if they were not of a particular faith?*

- No

## **12. Civic**

*Does it appear as though there are a variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community?*

- Large amount of clubs and organizations.

## **13. Residents**

*In what ways did you find (or not find) people helpful?*

- We asked several people about shopping in King and places to eat. Most were helpful and informative.
- Very friendly and helpful.
- Very friendly, knowledge of the area.
- Friendly atmosphere in and out of stores. Clear Water Harbor staff friendly and helpful. Main St. Market Place staff did not acknowledge me. The personal appearance of all employees was extremely neat.

*How did people talk about their community? What were their attitudes about their schools, public leaders, and community services?*

*Were community members knowledgeable about their community or able to refer you to people who were?*

- We asked about community events and most were knowledgeable and more than helpful about upcoming events. Some of the clerks in the stores were making signs for an event this weekend called Living History Festival. We asked a young waitress what there was to do for people her age and she said, “nothing.” But most people seemed happy with the community.
- Seemed to know community well.

*Did residents reflect the diversity that is represented in the rest of the country? Are there some segments of the population that would not feel comfortable in this community?*

- 

## **14. Public Infrastructure**

*Streets, street signing and lighting:*

- Excellent. Signage all matched and street lights.
- Street signs, banners and directional signs were great and matched with logo of the band shell.
- Well matched out of the city, downtown area. Appealing downtown.

- The blue & gold street signs are interesting. The information signs are hard to read and too close to the turn areas.
- Main St. Market Place absolutely lovely
- Welcome signs – where are they? I never saw a welcome to Waupaca sign.

*Land Use Planning:*

*Sidewalks:*

- Yes.

*Public Restrooms:*

- Is there a sign for public restrooms?
- I didn't notice a sign for public rest area.

*City/Village/Town Hall:*

- Great City Hall building, new and easily accessible.
- The City Hall/Library area is beautiful. The signage is good and the green space inviting.
- Beautiful!! The entire area in front of and inside well designed and decorated. Payment office is first stop-good idea. The mayor's office impressive. Clean bathrooms, wheelchair accessible. The staff extremely helpful. They would stop their task and answer questions or give guidance.
- Beautiful, clean and very well represented. Didn't have any trouble finding both. Signs great and very appealing of the front.
- Absolutely beautiful, clean, and very easy to find. Signage nice and a very professional impression. Staff very helpful in the library and City Hall.

*Police/Fire Protection/Emergency Medical Services Facilities:*

*Public Parking:*

- A lot of parking on Main St. because of angle parking.
- Angle parking is okay, but hard to back out.
- Angle parking allows for more vehicles but is also more dangerous. The traffic on Main St. is heavy.

*Library:*

- Beautiful. Located in same building as City Hall.
- Great library.

*Landscaping/street trees:*

- Very attractive, trees planted along Main St, cement trash containers throughout the city – all the same. Attractive flower planted in small containers along sidewalks, container could have been larger.
- Flower pots on Main St. seemed small.

*Pay phones, drinking fountains, benches, other misc.:*

- Pay phone located on Main St. and in City Hall. Benches in front of City Hall and by gazebo.
- I didn't see any pay phones.
- I also didn't see a pay phone.
- Water fountain?
- I only saw one and that was in a park. I only saw chairs outside Market Place and a café. Like the ideas of all the garbage cans.
- Benches outside café seating lovely, other benches on City Hall green space. The garbage containers are a good idea.

## **15. Recreation/Tourism**

*Is the community well known for any particular attraction or event? Do they have a community slogan that capitalizes on that asset?*

- The gazebo was on all signs and banners. Well coordinated. Didn't understand why they didn't have Chain of Lakes or something to do with water, but signs and banners were very attractive.
- Community known for Chain O' Lakes.

*Comment on the availability and selection of overnight accommodations:*

- Only a couple of motels in Waupaca but many beautiful and well kept motels, cottages in King. Several campgrounds available and a State Park with camping. Drove through state park, very beautiful, well kept and lots of camping facilities.
- Good info on lodging for whole area. Updated often.

*Did you see any indication of significant events taking place in the community that would be of interest to both visitors and residents?*

- Strawberry Festival coming up. Signs in most store windows.
- Notices on upcoming events on the outside of buildings a great idea. Also listing of hours open on front doors or windows a great idea.

*Are there any significant natural features that have the potential of drawing people to the community?*

- Reminded me a lot of Door County but not as commercialized.
- Chain O' Lakes, State Park

*Are there any significant man-made attractions?*

- The gazebo in front of City Hall. Bike paths and ATV trails. The Hutchison Museum was not open.
- Parks very small, but well maintained. Facilities seemed adequate. W(N)els Rassmussen Park flowers and waterfall beautiful.

*Is there an obvious visitor's center, chamber of commerce office, Main Street office, or other facility that serves the needs of visitors? Please comment on the staff, facilities, signage, visibility, etc.*

- Yes, as stated before, very impressive. Would love an office like that!
- Great building, staff very helpful, very professional in appearance. Plenty of info on everything you can think of.

- Brochure very fine, well done directions and descriptions. Frequently updated – so important.. Maps good.
- We saw the well marked building. It seems they had pamphlets, maps, info regarding questions we asked. The hours are appropriate, location good, interior neat/clean and display areas perfect. The map outside the main entrance is a good idea.
- I didn't know where it was, but found it very quickly. Information available was great, so many different brochures. Staff was helpful and appearance very professional. Hours are okay to the area business and a nice location. Very clean and display area very well done. Mag outside area with brochures a great idea.

*Are there any restaurants, specialty shops or attractions that would bring you back to this community in the near future?*

- We ate at The Harbor out on the deck. Great! Great places to shop! Boat rides looked like fun.
- Chain O'Lakes, Clear Water Harbor, Boat Cruise, Shopping.

## **16. Using your Senses**

*What did the community taste like? Was there any specialty food item, bakery, restaurant, or candy store that you will remember?*

- Enjoyed The Harbor, one of the stores had a display with fudge and ice cream right in their store in front.
- Touristy, resort.
- Regular/routine/comfortable Midwest.

*What did the community smell like?*

- Clean/fresh, except for foundry.
- Fresh.

*What sounds did you hear?*

- Lots of traffic. A parade featuring Special Olympics about 50 different law enforcement vehicles with their sirens on and community joined in walking and running in parade. Also about 30 motorcycles. Neat to have a parade on a Thursday afternoon.
- Friendly.
- Busy downtown sounds.

*Did you have any experiences that impacted the way the community feels?*

- I found nothing negative, not a lot of shoppers, but early yet for tourists.
- Angle parking very inconvenient, hard to back out into line of traffic.
- Warm inviting.
- Comfortable.

## 16. Wrap-up

*What are the 5 most positive things that you observed about the community?*

- 1) Businesses working together and promoting each other. 2) Very impressed with Chamber Office and staff. 3) Friendly and helpful store owners and restaurant staff. 4) Comparison to Door Co. but smaller and not so commercialized. 5) Great signage.
- 1) Friendly people. 2) Clean. 3) Offers plenty for size of community.
- 1) Clean. 2) Friendly. 3) A lot of choices. 4) Great vacation area. 5) A lot of food choices. 6) Great chamber staff. 7) Great signage and banners downtown. 8) Loved the tent signage on the sidewalk and tables and chairs.
- 1) Clean. 2) Many shops to choose from. 3) Friendly. 4) Resort area. 5) Waterfront dining great.
- 1) Fresh air. 2) Peaceful. 3) Friendly people. 4) Dining with a view of the water. 5) Clean.
- 1) City hospitality was great. 2) Young servers helpful with info. 3) Great signage, welcome and directional. 4) Merchants in King and Waupaca complimentary of each other. 5) The area had very good customer service. 6) Need better signage for construction. 7) Chamber staff was very professional and enthusiastic.

*What are the five biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?*

- 1) A lot of traffic in downtown (not a bad thing). 2) Angle parking-hard to back up, older people would probably have a hard time. 3) In front of hardware store, a lot of junk on the sidewalk.
- 1) Parking. 2) Displaying merchandise on the sidewalk.

*What will you remember most about this community six months from now (positive or negative)?*

- It seems like the city, chamber and main street all work very well together. Waupaca has a lot going for them!
- Chain O'Lakes, shopping.
- All the different shops, something for everyone. Beautiful gift shops. I wouldn't even have to go out of town to shop Fleet Farm!
- The size of the main downtown area and the neat appearance of the front and back of the stores.

*Describe ONE idea that you will borrow for use in your own business/community and describe how you will start to implement it within the next 72 hours!*

- I bought a button for the Strawberry Festival. Will use that idea for our CITP buttons. They offered a coupon for a free trolley ride and free shortcake. We will give away soda and popcorn.
- Handicap parking-address city officials.
- Widen downtown sidewalk but make homeowners remove all the advertising signs from their yards. Contact City Board members.

*Other:*

- I think everything we saw could and should be used in other areas. Banners, nametags on employees, planters, handicap parking. The area of Waupaca in my eyes are very different. Now I'll want to come back and take my company to an area where we can shop all different shops and dine in a very beautiful place, I'll feel like I'm on vacation! But only 33 miles from Berlin.
- Multiple golf courses, but need to have better signage. Replace signal lights with LED's

*You might want to consider tracking purchases (perhaps even finding a sponsor to provide \$50 to each participant). It would be useful to report where any money was spent within the community.*

*Insert pictures where appropriate in the sections above or paste your photos into the final report at the end using the following format:*

*Picture # \_\_\_\_\_*

*This Picture was taken because:*

*Please don't forget to send a copy of your final report to:  
[ablewis@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:ablewis@facstaff.wisc.edu) (an electronic version would be appreciated!)*

*Andy Lewis*

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