

First Impressions

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Waupun, WI

By Portage, WI

Visit conducted July 6, **1992**

A Program for Community Improvement

Developed by:

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

- I pictured a small, secluded city.
- Had driven through main street before and was not impressed, didn't expect it to be as nice as it was.
- Didn't know much about it, expected a mature community focused around a prison.
- I expected an old, provincial town.

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

Positive:

- New McDonalds, motel--new healthy development on Hwy 151.
- New development, an active industrial park and a generally clean city.
- The marsh.
- The goose motif signs.

Negatives:

- Old McDonalds and shopping center not well kept, not very appealing to the eye.
- East and South entrances could use some attention (a few businesses have tall weeds and old equipment outside) houses on south side could use attention also.

3. As you drive around town your comments on:

A. Appearance

1. Downtown

- Storefronts not very attractive or eye catching. Develop the dutch theme.
- Like the tulip theme, work on filling empty stores.
- Too many empty storefronts
- You need trees in your downtown.

- Plant trees to give your downtown a clean look
- Grass unkept in certain areas of downtown

2. Residential

- Beautiful old Victorian homes. Neatly manicured yards, flower boxes and gardens tell me that people have pride in their homes.
- Well maintained houses, except for Hwy 49S.
- Neat tree-lined, well kept residential areas.
- Beautiful residential areas; houses and lawns well maintained.

3. Industrial park

- Neat, room for expansion. One fabricating canning co. appeared vacant.
- Looks like they are making a real effort here, spacious, well laid out.
- On your main road, is a gray, dirty looking factory. It should be cleaned and maintained.

4. Parks

- Clean well kept parks. Beautiful, surprising sculptures.
- Nice parks throughout the city.
- Numerous parks, all of which were pleasant, well equipped and well used - lots of people and vitality.
- Didn't see any restrooms.

5. Schools

- Good mix of public and private. Jr. High needs better signing.
- Somewhat mixed reaction of residents when I talked with them about quality of schools.
- Schools looked very nice on the outside, good variety of public and parochial to choose from

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

- Adequate sidewalks and streets.
- Old, but functional.
- Wide streets a plus. Many curbs wheelchair accessible - hope the remainder will be soon.
- Some of the streets were rough and bumpy
- I think the downtown needs more street lights. I had a really difficult time crossing the street at the four way stop on foot.

7. Other

- The river is great! Grass should be mowed by waters edge - could be a great place for people to visit and relax. Clean up the windfalls.
- Stately city hall. Neat old library museum.
- I was quite taken with the sculptures.
- The Waupun State Prison was impressive (really liked the gates).
- Recreation--was very good! Many tennis courts, baseball diamonds, volleyball courts, parks, and basketball courts that looked in good condition. The pool/beach looked clean and fun on a hot day. I wish we had something like that in Portage.

B. Signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

- Really liked the Welcome to Waupun signs with the geese.
- Adequate.
- Eyecatching.
- There were signs everywhere, directing you to different

2. Streets

- Adequate.
- Easy to read and well marked.

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

- Direction sign to library was difficult to follow.
- Good.
- Good signs to hospital, didn't see any to parks - a shame.
- Very thorough directions to hospital.

4. Storefront signs

- Could be improved upon.
- Nothing unique.
- Perhaps you could enlist civic and youth groups to "dress up" the empty windows.

5. Industrial park

- Better signing needed. A large manufacturing site north side of downtown - totally unsigned.
- It would be helpful if signs indicated type of product or manufacturing.

6. City Hall, police, etc.

- How would you know if it was city hall? No signs. Also need a sign before the stairs to let people know to use side door entrance and that city offices are downstairs.
- No sign, very difficult to identify city hall.
- City Hall not marked in any way, very poor impression. Entrance deceptive- front door locked, no sign till you get to top of stairs.

7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

- A nice absence of billboards.
- Need to tell visitors (not necessarily by billboard) about statues - What a shame if people.
- Not too many, which is good.

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

A. City/Village Hall

1. Is there a street map?

- Yes, I received good info from both the city hall and chamber.
- Yes, provided by a friendly helpful person.
- Why not have a street map sitting right on the counter so people can help themselves.
- You had to ask for a street map, but you could get one. It was easy to follow and very clear. The statues, parks, library, hospital and other important buildings were well marked.

2. Community brochure/directory

- Saw brochures, but none were for Waupun.
- Yes, a very informative brochure.
- At the City Hall, I did obtain a packet on the recreational activities in the community. I do know you could obtain more brochures on the community.

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

- Didn't inquire. In talking with local residents, most worthwhile employment is with the state.
- Not applicable to a teenager

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

- We received good recommendations and the restaurant we ate at was quite good.
- Yes, good suggestions.
- You had to ask the people and they could give you their personal favorite restaurant. You could also obtain brochures on places to stay, eat, visit, etc.

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

- Chamber offered this info. Yes.
- Along with the recreational packet, I received a list of about 25 names and phone numbers of people who you could contact if you wanted more information

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

- None offered or requested.
- Lovely "Trails End" pin very much appreciated.
- Yes, there were postcards, pins and other items representing the community.

B. Chamber office/visitor info center

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

- Needs a bigger sign. I almost missed it. Looks like a regular store.
- The people I talked to knew where the chamber office was, but it was hard to locate. It looked like another store in the downtown area.
- Chamber was easy to locate. When we arrived, however, there was a bus blocking the entrance.
- Chamber office was easy to find and residents referred me to it twice.

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

- Good reliable information available, could use more pizzazz.
- Yes, provided by most helpful staff, proud of what Waupun has to offer.
- There were brochures on different things you could do in the city.

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

- Yes - Staff volunteered lots of information - told about all the special events throughout the year.
- They had brochures on the different motels and restaurants in the city. The person at the chamber office also recommended his/her favorite places to stay, eat, or visit.

4. How prepared/helpful were they.

- The gentleman at the Chamber was very cordial and helpful, so were the people at city hall once we got in the building.
- The Chamber staff person knew her stuff and was happy to share it with visitors. A real asset to Waupun. Great place for an enthusiastic person.

- They were very helpful. They were also prepared to answer every question you asked. If they couldn't answer a question, they were ready to refer you to the city hall or any other business that could.

5. Convenient hours?

- Satisfactory.

- Yes.

- I didn't get a good look at the hours, but they were open all the time we were there and that was convenient for us.

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

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

- a. All but one of the people I talked to were natives and very knowledgeable of the community.
- b. Everyone I talked to was friendly and knowledgeable.
- c. One person told me all about the 3 prisons and their impact on the
- d. Kids told me about recreational opportunities. Librarian referred me to Waupun history section.
- e. The people I talked to were very knowledgeable about directions, institutions, services, recreational and community events.

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

- a. Never ran into a need to seek referral.
- b. Yes, residents referred me to city hall, chamber and library.
- c. One lady I talked to did. She told me about the community and said I could talk to someone in the City Hall or Chamber Office if I wanted more information. The man in the Chamber Office referred me to the City Hall. But generally, they told me what they knew and that was it.

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

- a. Everyone I talked with/to expressed a feeling of pride in their city and

what it had to offer.

- b. Knowledgeable, friendly and helpful service and retail personnel. It was enjoyable talking with residents.
- c. Friendly, helpful people, neat well cared for homes.
- d. Most people I encountered were happy with their work.
- e. They were very friendly and open to answering all my question. Their attitude toward their community was **a** good one. They were eager and willing to answer my questions. They looked very clean and nice.

4. Other comments

- a. Cordial and candid people.
- b. I talked with a lady at the daycare center, found out their hours, services, rates. Appeared to be serving need of community.
- c. I enjoyed meeting the people I did. They were all very interesting to talk to. They seemed willing to drop what they were doing to talk to me.

5. General

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

- Knowledgeable of dutch heritage.
- Well informed residents.
- The residents I talked to seemed to know all about their community. They had no trouble answering my questions or giving directions. Some also went beyond my questions and I learned more about the community from them. They all were very friendly and eager to talk to me.

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

- Appeared to be a variety of retail stores. New and Old motels with another new one under construction. Good service and hospitality everywhere I went—restaurants, retail, service-but no pressure to buy.
- A wide variety of retail services.

- Too many car washes.
- They need more clothing and novelty stores for teenagers.

C. Are there public restrooms?

- Yes - city hall and gas stations.
- Many of the public buildings had restrooms. The only thing I didn't see **was** too many restrooms in the parks. I think there should be some restrooms in the parks so travelers can stop by, stretch their legs and use the restrooms.

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

- Conveniently located in good working condition.

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

- Neat and attractive, somewhat active.
- What's there looked good.
- Clean and well maintained.

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

- The restaurant I ate at was mediocre.
- Had a very good lunch food and service.
- Afternoon break at the soda fountain was refreshing and nostalgic.
- The food at the restaurant I ate was very good. We also stopped at an ice cream shop. The ice cream was very good and they had candy there that you can't find in stores anymore.

G. What does community SMELL like?

- Clean.
- Good, nothing offensive.
- The smell was generally very nice. Like every city, it has it's good smells and bad smells, but overall it was pretty good.

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

- Traffic noise, but not at annoying levels.
- General auto and pedestrian traffic.
- The downtown area was loud and noisy. This was because many trucks were going through there, and there is nothing they can do about that. The rest of the town was very quiet and calm.

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

- Warm and friendly, not crowded.
- I got the impression that Waupun is a friendly town for a visitor, but for new residents, it is rough to acclimate into the community - very tight social structure according to a couple of the people I talked to.
- I thought the community felt very warm and inviting. It seemed a little crowded in the downtown area, but the residential area seemed very roomy with a calm, peaceful atmosphere. Even the industrial park seemed inviting. In all, the city seemed warm, inviting and relaxed.

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

- The people could not have been more helpful. I got the distinct feeling that people liked their community. They seem to be continually striving to make their community better.
- I found the people of Waupun courteous, warm and candid.
- I really enjoyed talking to the teenagers. I asked them about the school system and the different recreational activities in the city. They answered all my questions with a friendly attitude. When I was walking, everyone was constantly smiling and greeting me. The people were helpful and very nice.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

- My opinion of Waupun has changed considerably - a pleasant surprise, would like to go back again. Could use a few nice eating places. Work more on revitalizing downtown. Market hidden treasures - the beautiful sculptures. I never would have dreamed that they were there.
- Waupun is a nice community. Capitalize on nearby bedroom communities - particularly with the Dutch festivals.
- Waupun suffers from the same problems that many smaller communities face.

They are too close to Fon du Lac and Beaver Dam (major shopping centers). It is extremely difficult to keep the store fronts occupied. There has to be a change from the way things operated in the past. Specialty Shops offer one solution (Siegrid's is an example. Also some empty store uses fronts will have to convert to other--the senior center is a good example.) Waupun has a solid employment base in the prisons and a fine dutch history. It also is a bedroom community to Beaver Dam and Fond du Lac. Build on these attributes.

- One comment I have is about this booklet. I am a teenager and I couldn't answer some of these questions. This is because it isn't normal for a teenager to do some of these things (i.e. go into a store and start talking to an adult about the history of the community). I have answered these question as best as I could. In the future, maybe this book could include questions about different recreational activities, things to do in the city, places to shop, etc. for the younger crowd.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SIX MONTHS FROM NOW

- The sculptures, the people, the pool that was created out of a quarry, senior citizens center.

- The quaint shops, the sculptures.

- I will remember Waupun as a friendly caring community. They have a good stable employment base and what appears to be a strong work ethic. A good deal of community pride.

- I will probably remember the beautiful old houses and how nice they look. I will also remember the friendly attitude of the people.

6. Doing it Right!

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

1. The smiles, the friendly, helpful people, the positive attitudes--great advertising for Waupun
2. This community cares about its elderly and youth as evidenced by its wonderful senior center, community center and abundance of recreational facilities (parks, two swimming pools, indoor ice rink, etc.)
3. The maintenance and integration of prisons in the center of the city as well as the positive attitude toward the prisons, the realization that they provide a stable employment base, the friendly helpful people with positive attitudes--they are great advertising for Waupun!

4. A well maintained and active industrial park, good schools and a variety of churches
5. The beautiful sculptures, the tulip theme and the dutch heritage

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 really like the senior center. I think it would be a good idea to think about the possibilities of starting one in Portage. It gave senior citizens a fun place to go instead of just sitting at home and doing nothing. This way, they could have a place to have fun with their friends.