

First Impressions

of

Bellevue, Iowa

Fennimore Visit 4/16/91

A program for community improvement

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

Had been there once before so I had some idea of what to expect from a physical standpoint. I particularly remembered the river and Potter's Mill.

A tour similar to Fennimore.

A small rural river community without a lot of recreational opportunities. I also tend to forget about the rolling hills along the Mississippi River when I think of Iowa.

I had none.

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

The approaches on both ends are better than most. The north end has some clutter prior to entering town (bowling alley area, above ground tank, etc.)

Positive: *Hwy 52 North - Beautiful views of valleys/river. Community entrance sign. House on hillside, river, park and well kept homes.*

Hwy 52 South - Mill, creek, park on right and beautiful farm house on left - community sign - Potter's Mill.

Railroad Car

The well done Bellevue sign

The entrance sign on the north end is one of the nicest community signs I have seen (stone). The view of Spring Side Inn on the north side of town and Potter's Mill on the south end are impressive (also a great view of town from the park). Also a great view of the river through most of town. Very scenic roads leading to town from the north.

The town size.

Nice Topography.

Negatives: *Hwy 52 North - Some junk on property at edge of town. Bellevue industries property is not attractive.*

Hwy 52 South - Trailers under bridge on right.

Bellevue Cement & Gravel

Truck Topper Place

Wood For Sale Pile - All three an eye sore

Horizon's Lanes - The little park

Plus all the businesses ran together.

Needed cleaning.

Most of the commercial and industrial land uses on the north side are unattractive. Although the highways leading to Bellevue were scenic, they might be intimidating to a business reliant on trucking.

Junkie places - implement Dealer - cement plant - log pile, across from Anchor Inn is a junk yard.

3. As YOU drive around town your comments on;

Appearance

1. Downtown

Generally attractive - preponderance of well kept older buildings is nice - some could use some paint. Convenience store designs don't fit with others.

Some of the Buildings that were repaired are extremely well done. Still some are in desperate need of repair. A little paint will make a big improvement.

A very nice main street area with a well preserved view of the river. I liked the balconies on several of the businesses on main street. There were a few vacancies on Main Street (e.g., the Ice Cream Shop and the site of the old hotel).

Great possibilities - buildings should be restored to original - unpainted house across from community center and junk cars.

2. Residential

Very impressive - pride of ownership is very evident. Number of older homes that are in excellent condition speaks well of area

I was impressed. Everyone must take a lot of pride in their homes. Very well kept homes.

Impressive, nice mix of historic and new homes, well kept homes and yards, only two realty signs! (good or bad?)

OK

3. Industrial park

Not clearly defined - found industry in two locations. Rockwell building is very impressive and well maintained

Disappointed - couldn't tell what the Industrial Park was all about. No sign. No plot's staked, no maps, etc.

The Industrial Park was difficult to find. Although there may not be available space, there was no sign indicating who could be contacted. There did not appear to be an organized effort to create a formal industrial park

Needs signs.

4. Parks

River park is a real asset to community - like the Gazebo. Cole Park is well done - like the use of old street lights along the walkway.

I thought the parks were excellent. They had bathrooms. Parks were well lighted, with antique fixtures.

Cole Park and the Riverside Park (Corp of Engineers) were well kept. The State Park is magnificent. Boat landing did not appear to be well maintained.

Nice for a small town.

5. Schools

High school in general good condition - all the metal building additions concern me though. Did district take "cheapest alternatives" in meeting space needs.

The only school I had a problem with is the High School. Needed paint, also the unattached class room's are different colors. Maybe the High School needs an addition?

Was not impressed. The grade school and St. Joseph's School appeared to be quite old. The gym at the grade school appeared to be a cheap addition. The high school was actually a fairly nice building but several temporary classrooms appear to be now permanent. Facia boards need painting.

Too much of a "hodge podge" - the building I saw did not give me a feeling of a commitment to education.

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

*Sidewalks seemed in general good repair - riverfront **and** Second Street were in good condition - the rest were in awful shape and not just spring breakup - they are obviously neglected. How about older decorative lights on riverfront - why are current lights connected with overhead wires???*

*Sidewalks - good shape.
Streets - desperate need of repair.
Lighting - Main Street should have antique lighting. Bury electric lines going to the light fixtures.*

*Sidewalks were **in** fair condition. I liked the historic lights on Second Street. The streets, with a few exceptions, were in very poor shape.*

*Sidewalks **O.K.** - streets are **in** bad shape - I liked the antique lights at lock - signs need painting - hill back **of** lock trashy.*

Very few good streets. Pot Hole City.

7. Other

B. Signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

New community entrance signs are stunning - absolutely beautiful or should I say, "simply beautiful."

*Entrance - excellent.
Exit sign - none.*

Great entrance sign on the north side of town. I also liked the idea of putting a welcome sign at the boat landing! I don't recall seeing a sign on the south side.

Entrance very good.

2. Streets

All streets appeared to be signed and functional.

Normal.

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

Lacking - only directions were to library.

You really have to look for signs.

Signing for community and recreational facilities was poor. I only recall seeing signs for the library and Spring Side Inn. Even the library didn't have an identification sign once you found it.

Not enough.

4. Storefront signs

Since signs are flat against buildings, they are hard to see when walking on sidewalk - window signing could help. Some need upkeep.

The Store's need signage so the person walking down the street does not have to walk out onto the road to see what shop they are in front of.

Most of the signing was well done. Stores were easily identified and the signing in general was done in good taste.

They should conform to a theme.

5. Industrial park

No signs.

No sign.

What signing?

Can't find it.

6. City Hall, police, etc.

Drove by building 3 times looking for it - no signs - finally saw Cornerstone.

No sign - couldn't find it! Drove past it several times.

Poor. There was a sign on the town hall building but it was difficult to read.

Need to be better.

7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

No problems or comments.

None.

Not a lot of clutter.

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

A. City/Village Hall

We didn't visit.

Never made it to City Hall because when we finally found it, was time to leave.

1. Is there a street map?

Not for Bellevue, but we did receive a county map from town hall.

I don't know.

2. Community brochure/directory

Provided with a Bellevue and Jackson County brochure! I liked both the Jackson County and Bellevue brochures. However, I thought the Bellevue brochure omitted several points of interest. . .the site of the old hotel (Bellevue War - great story!), lock & dam system, wildlife/fishing, narrow gauge (restored caboose), and Spring Side Inn. There is a picture of a golfer. . .where is the golf course?

I received one, it's o.k.

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

The town hall provided us with an unsolicited (good!) labor profile for Jackson County. We did not receive a community profile for Bellevue.

I did not receive one.

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

Several retailers provided us with good recommendations for several restaurants (the gas stations, antique store, etc.).

Very good. I think the people know their community.

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

Were referred to the city administration and chamber of commerce by several business people.

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

None

B. Chamber office/visitor info center

Not open - either one.

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

Visitor center opens in May - sign that says so - not legible. How about directions to businesses that have display racks or at least a map of town.

Hard to find, though we were referred to it. Chamber Office was closed Did not say when it would open.

The three people we asked were able to provide us directions to the chamber office. The Visitor Information Center was in a good location and well signed. . .but closed. A sign is needed that would direct visitors to a business or town hall for information. Should consider expanding hours to April.

It wasn't open.

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

(Picked up at businesses) Like Chamber of Commerce 1991 calendar of events - especially the map. Historic tour book was interesting.

The office was closed and there was no sign listing hours of operation or directing us to another location for information.

I did not receive a street map. Brochure is good You need more of a profile.

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

The office was closed and there was no sign listing hours of operation or directing us to another location for information.

You have nice places to stay, eat and visit.

4. How prepared/helpful were they.

The office was closed and there was no sign listing hours of operation or directing us to another location for information.

They weren't open.

5. Convenient hours?

Not open - no hours listed - glad to see that a community of that size has an office on the main street.

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

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

Very helpful - impressive

Everyone we talked to was very knowledgeable of their city.

The waitress at Potter's Mill and Mark Jaspers at the bed and breakfast were exceptional. Employees/owners at the gas station, Paradise Antiques, hardware store, Lock 12 Bar, and Sportsland were all knowledgeable about attractions and history of the area

The people were knowledgeable - friendly. I could live with these people.

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

Yes they did, the people of Bellevue bent over backward to help us.

All of the merchants referred us to others if they were unable to provide the information themselves.

I didn't ask anything they couldn't answer.

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

Very positive about community - All seem to have a real pride in their area

Friendly - Warm - Helpful, Apple pie and Chev.

Almost everyone in town appeared to be very proud of their community! Sometimes had to be a little aggressive to get people to talk but once they spoke it was sometimes hard to get them to stop talking about their community.

Good attitude.

4. Other comments

We started the conversations so I don't know how they would respond if we hadn't been so outgoing.

Learned about "hogging catfish" from the operator of Sportsland • very entertaining individual.

Nice and friendly people • a fairly positive attitude.

5. General

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

Yes - definitely

*I would **say** the majority of the residents know their community history and are proud of it.*

*Exceptional. For example, we asked three people about the caboose on the north side of town. **All** three knew that it was from a narrow gauge track that once ran from Bellevue to LaMotte.*

I think so.

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

More business than I would expect in this sue town. Amazed at the number of B & B's.

Good variety.

*A good mix of traditional retail and specialty shops catering to the visitors. Was not, however, impressed with the quality of the hardware **or** grocery stores.*

Not enough variety but you are in a small town.

C. Are there public restrooms.

*Not listed **as** such.*

Outside of town at Mill Park

None marked or visible • would be nice for riverside area • Corp of Engineers?

I don't know.

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

At service station • OK

I only saw one sign. That was by the Convenience Store.

Forgot to check • don't recall seeing any.

I don't know.

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

Didn't find an actual "park."

*What Industrial **Park**, needs more planning.*

No, although some work appears to be taking place.

It looks good, you just can't find it.

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

Food at hotel was great • as was their service.

Good "HomeCooking"!

Great food at Potter's Mill. Didn't have room for fudge, no bakery.

I liked Potter's Mill.

G. What does community SMELL like?

No special smell • positive or negative.

Smell's great. Maybe this summer being next to the river might change things.

Potter's Mill had a musty smell • I expected to smell grains, fresh baked bread, etc.

Alive.

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

Lots of traffic but no unusual sounds.

Tugs on the river, cars)birds)people talking etc.

Barge traffic, warm breeze off the river.

River sounds.

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

Plenty of cars, lots of activity • sense of pride and excitement was obvious.

Warm and inviting.

Very warm and inviting.

Small town • friendly and inviting.

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

Everyone was friendly, outgoing • really impressed with business people in community.

(1) Riverview • stopped for lunch. When we started to talk to our waitress she was a little reserved but warmed up fast. (2) Dave Kendall • we could have visited with him for hours. He seems really trying to make things work for Bellevue. (3) Overall • warm, friendly, eager to help.

Everyone appeared to be enthusiastic about their community and willing to help visitors. This includes long-time and recent residents. Most people felt that business was improving. . . especially the tourism industry.

We've covered this before but I would like to compliment Cindy Blacke at City Hall. I asked for tourist info and she also gave me some industrial info. (Good move.)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

How about community business directory like several malls have. Had I not spent time walking around, I would have missed several businesses like doll maker, Carrousel Corner, etc. Historic tour book was good but only available at one place.

(1) Keepsake Treasures • the owner went out of her way to show us how she makes a doll. (2) Carrousel Comer • the ladies there sure made us welcome.

MEDICAL SERVICES: *Good support system for a small rural community • both a clinic and a care center. Meal site and community center was a plus.*

It has great possibilities • you need a comprehensive plan and stick with it. In downtown the trucks should use the alley not 1st street.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY
SIX MONTHS FROM NOW

View of River • Woman Who Makes Dolls • Potter's Mill • B & B's (Espesial & Spring Side) • Gehlen Barn in St. Donatus • Bad Streets.

The river • Bellevue sign • Railroad car • The many Bed and Breakfast Homes • Potter's Mill • Mr. Jasper and his wife who own the Spring Side Inn • The Downtown area • The many warm and friendly residents • Barges on the Mississippi • Tomorrow Keep Sake for the dolls.

The river view, traveling to and in town • Poor roads in town • Friend & people • Potter's Mill • State Park, Butterfly Gardens • Spring Side Inn • "Hogging Catfish" • Antique Stores.

The locks • reading plaque about Bellevue War • visiting one of the Bed and Breakfasts • Potter's Mill.

6. Doing it Right!

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

1. *Friendly people*
2. *Community sign at entrance*
3. *Well kept houses*
4. *Potter's Mill*
5. *Excellent use of river frontage.*

1. *The restoration of Bellevue.*
2. *Community involvement to pitch in and help. (Butterfly Garden, etc.)*
3. *The Bellevue signs.*
4. *The cleanliness of the town. Didn't see a lot of garbage out.*
5. *The warm and friendly residents of Bellevue.*

1. *River view/lock and dam*
2. *Stone entrance sign*
3. *Friendly people*
4. *State Park*
5. *Spring Side Inn/Potter's Mill*

1. *People*
2. *Scenery*
3. *Not a lot of traffic*
4. *I like antique shops*
5. *The possibility to restore store fronts*

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!

Get people to look at signing from a pedestrians point of view.

The restoration program. I will call key individuals in Fennimore about the positive outlook of the City of Bellevue. The Community working together in order for it to survive in the 90's and the future.

Brochures were readily available in most of the tourism-related businesses - excellent!

I like the historical plaque on one of the buildings. Something to read as you walk down the street. We could do this on our building telling what the buildings were when the Narrow Gauge went through our town.

ADDITIONAL, COMMENTS:

Bellevue seemed to be a very warm and friendly community. It sounded like Bellevue in the past five to ten years has come along ways. The only things that bothered me were the High School (needs addition), Industrial Park (needs a lot of work), the streets need to be repaired, some businesses do not blend in with Bellevue, such as the Convenient Stores, Big D's Super Market needs something - anything!! Same with Horizons Lanes. Overall, I would possibly move there. Bellevue seems to be heading in right direction.

Tomorrows Keepsakes - window display was best I've ever seen - would I know these were handmade?? County Cupboard - exceptional job with building renovation. How about tourism info plaque/map like some malls have. Medical Associates - nice clinic - sign needs letters replaced. Theisens Variety - clerk and customer very helpful.