

First Impressions

of

Belmont, WI

by Potosi/Tennyson, WI

Visit Conducted

10/13/94

A program for community improvement

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I **First Impressions Report**

Introduction

On Thursday, October 13, 1994, **Potosi/Tennyson** visited Belmont to conduct a First Impressions exchange.

It was a lovely, crisp, Fall day, as four women toured the community. Three of the participants were business owners from either Potosi or Tennyson and one was an employee of the Grant County Economic Development Corporation.

Although Belmont is a community none of the participants frequent often, it still felt like "visiting neighbors".

We all were impressed with your community and especially with the friendliness and hospitality of your residents.

We enjoyed our visit very much, and hope you will find the following report to be helpful.

Good luck in your goal to make Belmont the very best "First Impression" it can be.

As you approach the community.....

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

-A small community near Platteville. I had passed through many times, but never stopped.

-I've been through Belmont many times on the way to Madison and stopped many times in Belmont for athletic events at the high school. I guess my perception was one of a nice small community with really no main street of business.

-I have driven through Belmont many times and it always appeared to be a very quiet, little town with a major highway going through it.

-My perception was that I would see a typical, pleasant small town. I expected to see an average amount of activity for a normal week day.

II. The "five minute" impression:

Take one drive through the community without stopping. As you exit the community, pull over to the side of the road and write down what you felt about the town with only this quick look. Do this in silence, don't talk with the others in your group for this part.

-A nice-looking, small town with new street (highway 151) and curb/gutters. Not many businesses on Main Street, but lots of residential. Nice low-income apartments at one end of town.

-Quiet, very quiet and peaceful. Not much movement or activity. A commuting community.

-Wide streets

-Quiet - not much activity

-Good location for park

-Nice sidewalks

-The residential area was much larger than expected so I surmise that most of the employment is in surrounding 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 members will hoof it and start visiting businesses, city hall, etc. After lunch the teams will switch roles so everyone has a chance to drive the community and to personally walk into stores and visit with people.

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III. Driving...evaluate EACH entrance.

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

-151 Entrance (West) **Good** looking - clean, with nice Belmont sign.

-151 Entrance (North) There is a house back from the road that needs removing or possibly repairing. Not as good looking as entrance from Platteville, but still good. Same as at West entrance.

-County G Entrance was very pretty except for abandoned trailer house. **No** sign that I saw.

-126 Entrance was also a pretty, rural entrance. I noticed that there was the nice Belmont sign.

-151 entrance (West) has an attractive sign. Other entrances are mostly business sites and are spread out.

-Nice signs from entrance on 151 both ways. I didn't notice one from Darlington. Clean entrances. Didn't notice any junk yards which you sometimes do in small communities.

-Both entrances were clean, good streets and well maintained. Signs in good positions. The cemetery was neat and well maintained.

-With such a wide Main Street, First State Capitol Flags or American Flags would look nice on poles or street lights.

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

-There really aren't many businesses. Most people probably shop in Platteville. Some of the businesses (Tiedemanns) need better signs on their stores. Main Street was good, but the side street kind of deteriorate.

-Could be better **signage** on businesses. Some just have cardboard sign in window. Tiedemann building should be tom down. Very distracting.

-Downtown businesses were very neat and clean. Could use a little update on some store fronts. The community building could use a coat of paint.

-New water tower.

-Downtown businesses are mainly on the street that goes through town. Some of the store fronts didn't have readily visible signs indicting the type of business.

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

- Your cheese factory is doing a great job on the new bldg.
- Gas station on Main needs repair or removal.
- Nice co-op and great looking firehouse. We were also impressed with the family housing construction through FHA.
- Some nice, new building, but I'm not sure what they were, i.e., salvage yard.
- There was a new building in another part of town but I couldn't tell what it was because it didn't have a sign.
- Businesses just seem to pop up • no rhyme or reason to downtown area.
- A new cheese factory was being constructed • a great asset for the community • replacing old building.

V. Driving...comments on residential:

- Residential area was really very good. There were many more homes, than I thought there would be. Yards, for the most part, were well-kept and mowed. A few houses need paint. The trailer across the the town shed needs lots of work. I've seen worse mobile home courts.
- Nice residential area with growth! I liked that new apartment building going up • should be great for your schools.
- Lots of homes • felt it's definitely a bedroom community.
- A new subdivision on East side of town.
- Other residential areas seem well maintained.
- Noticed a trailer court in a designated area • a few others scattered in town.
- Nice elderly apartment buildings.
- For the most part very nice. New homes are very attractive, other homes well-kept.

VI. Driving...comments on:

a. street signs

- Typical street signs which are easy to miss.
- Good.
- Adequate.
- Sufficient.

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b. traffic patterns/street conditions

- There wasn't much traffic except on 151. Driving around didn't seem to be a problem for our driver except when we "ignored signs" and drove by the new cheese factory.
- Nice wide streets. Nice sidewalks.
- The streets were in good condition.
- Street conditions were good. Streets wider than in most small towns.
- It was easy to drive around.

c. welcome signs (at entrances)

- All entrances that had signs had a very nice one.
- ~~Good~~ at two entrances.
- Nice welcome signs on each entrance.
- Green state signs on other entrance (Rd. 126).
- Attractive, well-placed.

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

- School wasn't well signed but we found it. Everything else was on the Main Street so you couldn't miss it. Clinic ~~could~~ have more direction. (By the way, you have some good teachers at your school, I've met some of them and was very impressed.)
- Well marked.
- Good signage for school.
- Easy to find police sign.
- Easy to find First State Capitol (green State sign).
- Sign to First State Capital somewhat hard to find. Perhaps it could be larger, and couple of more needed to promote tourism. Other signs are okay.

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VII. Driving... comments on industrial park/area: Sign well defined...busy...growing...new...etc.

- Didn't find one.
- Didn't know if you have an industrial park, but certainly noticed the new cheese factory and then something being built on entrance from Mineral Point.
- Very impressed with the construction going on with cheese factory building and the new Belmont Family housing.
- Noticed a big empty building at edge of town - would be a nice building for a small company or business to locate.
- Signs were very informative, listing phone numbers, people to contact, etc.

VIII. Driving...comments on schools:

- School looked good except for that green and white wall. I wondered if all grades were located at that one site. I like your athletic field right behind the school.
- Nice schools. Took awhile to find elementary - in a nice quiet neighborhood. Should give the kids a good secure feeling.
- Drove past High School building. **Good** signage for school. The grounds were well maintained.
- Didn't see elementary school, but was told it was in an older building. Asked if there was a **daycare** or preschool and was told one was being considered in a Church basement.
- Attractive, **well-maintained**. **Good** location.

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

- Your park is wonderful. Well-kept with plenty of play equipment and a nice shelter.
- Nice park - well kept. **Good** location.
- Nice park located right in the middle of town. Has a modern shelter house - good tennis courts. The trees were pretty.
- Drove to First State Capitol - it seemed to be well maintained.
- Park readily accessible, attractive.

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X. Driving...comments on other:

a. hospitals/clinics

- Great - you have your own clinic. It was a nice looking facility.
- Saw medical clinic - I'm impressed! Who are you affiliated with - Platteville?
- Noticed a Doctor's clinic. Belmont is fortunate to have one.
- Noticed doctor's office. Impressed that a small town provides this service.

b. billboards/advertising

- I really didn't notice a lot of billboards and signs which was nice. I didn't think there were enough signs for the First State Capitol or Mound.
- Could be spruced up.
- Minimal.
- Store fronts need larger, more visible signs.

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

- I was pleasantly surprised that you have your own library. It was closed when I visited.
- Could try to pull both areas of retail business together by maybe flags on street lights. Signs on businesses could be improved. Need new store fronts.
- Although the business fronts were neat and clean, maybe some could be a little more unique.
- Nice fire department building.
- Noticed a Public Library, but it was closed.
- Some improvement needed. The very old abandoned buildings should be demolished.

XII. Walking around...comments on people:

Were they friendly, did they know answers to questions, did they try to help, appearance, etc.

- People were very helpful and pleasant. Some passers-by in cars waved at us as we walked. Everyone we asked questions of answered them well. Cathy's Cafe had good food and our waitress (Cathy's Mom) was very helpful.
- Very friendly, helpful. I bought Belmont cheese in Knebels. The clerk was not well versed on the product. I think if you're producing a product in your community, the citizens better know something about it.

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- Stopped in Post Office for information. Very helpful and friendly. Gave us a brochure.
- Ate lunch at Cathy's Cafe - good food.
- Stopped in Knebel's - excellent meat counter.
- Stopped in hardware store - salesman was very helpful.
- Very friendly, answered questions readily.
- The people were very friendly. The cafe where we ate lunch was family-owned and they were easy to visit with.

XIII. Community information: comments on.....

a. community brochure (tourist type)

- Community brochure is out-dated. Not the same water tower and **1980** Census information
- Brochure is geared towards attracting businesses and residents, not tourists. Need a more attractive inviting picture on front of brochure.
- Nice brochure but could be updated - noticed the old water tower picture and school information on it is for **1980-81**.
- Brochure is put together well.

b. businesses/attractions brochures or directory

- There was a nice brochure for the First State Capitol.
- Need some phone numbers in the brochure. Maybe it's time to update the brochure.
- Included in community brochure.

c. community profile (demographic, industrial type information for prospective business people, etc.

- City Office had a WP&L Profile of Belmont which was nice.
- I'd say their brochure is their community profile.
- Didn't see one.
- Didn't see any.

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d. map

- I forget which brochure, but one did have a map.
- Didn't see one.
- Didn't see any, but didn't ask for one.
- Didn't see any.

e. other (ie. bulletin/notice tourism, kiosks, etc.)

- Didn't see any.
- Didn't see any.

XIV. City Hall...describe your visit:

a. appearance of facility, including signing

- Needs some paint (especially on sign). What a nice community center attached to City Hall.
- O.k. Front needs paint.
- Outside of building could use a little updating. Inside of building was o.k. Easy to find - tight on Main Street. There were signs on building for City Hall and police.

b. helpfulness of staff

- Lady who helped us was very informative and helpful.
- Very helpful and courteous.
- Asked for directions to First State Capitol. The lady was very friendly and helpful. She gave good directions and a brochure.
- Inquired about the community building next door and she told us about the use of it for different organizations and groups.

XV. Chamber of Commerce...describe your visit

a. did people know where it was (or who to refer you to?)

- None.
- Didn't see one. Don't know if they have a Chamber. Lion's Club must be active as they are the ones who had the brochure published.

b. comment on information available

- Information at City Hall.

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c. comment on staff

N/A

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

N/A

XVI. Other stuff....

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

- I didn't see any.
- Didn't see one.
- Didn't notice any.
- Didn't see any.

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

- Oops - I didn't see any.
- Right in front of library - very visible.
- Didn't see one.
- By library.

c. Parking

- Public parking at center of Main Street. Very convenient.
- Good - even some municipal parking!
- Adequate parking on Main Street.
- Adequate.

d. water fountains, benches, etc.

- In the park.

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WRAP UP

A. Using your "senses"...

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

- I have always heard so much about Knebels that the community would surely taste like smoked meat and "Prize Winning Hams" (which I bought one of).
- Had breakfast at Cathy's which was very good. Cathy's mother waited on us and was very pleasant.
- Cathy's Cafe had good food.
- Very country, down-home taste.

2. What does the community SMELL like:

- Nice, fresh country smell.
- Fall - leaves.
- Clean air
- Had the smell of Fall
- Fresh, crisp.

3. What SOUNDS did you hear?

- Only sounds were traffic on 151.
- Very quiet on main street.
- Traffic
- Construction
- Trucks driving through, birds singing. Ordinary traffic.

4. What did the community feel like (emotional response, i.e. cold/warm, crowded /deserted, inviting, etc., or physical response, i.e. rough streets, etc.)

- Friendly, as I said people waved at us on the street. It was neighborly too. We had a conversation with "folks" passing through from Lincoln, Nebraska, at the cafe.
- Inviting, quiet, laid back. I have a feeling that on a Thursday morning 80% of Belmont has gone to another community to work.
- Quiet but friendly. Not much movement on sidewalks.
- Responsive, peaceful, quiet.

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B. List the 5 most positive things you observed about the community:

1. Friendly people
 2. Community park
 3. Historical attractions
 4. Knebel's
 5. Mound
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1. Streets are wide and clean
 2. New **construction**, both residential and industrial
 3. **Good** clean schools
 4. **Doctor's** office
 5. Great to see a library in a small town
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1. Friendly people and helpful
 2. Neat and clean - wide streets
 3. New **construction** of cheese factory
 4. New construction of housing
 5. **Good** sidewalks
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1. Clean air
 2. Quiet surroundings
 3. Well-kept homes
 4. Friendly atmosphere
 5. Truly country living

C. Describe ONE idea that you will steal for use in your own business/community and describe how you will start to implement it within the next 72 hours:

- I'll wave and talk to more people.
- I'd like to see a library in Potosi. I don't know what I will do in 72 hours about it though!
- Check into the Belmont Family Housing construction and see if it could be implemented in our community.
- Can't think of any thing.

D. What will you remember most about the community six months from now:

- That it is home of the First State Capitol.
- Probably the friendly people at Knebel's and Cathy's.
- Friendly people
- Walking down the sidewalk and people waving at you
- New construction for housing and commercial
- Lunch at the town cafe.

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E. Other comments (that just didn't seem to fit anywhere else!)

-I think you should draw more on the great attractions you have in your own back yard, i.e., Mound, First State Capitol. And what about that State Park - I didn't even know it existed until we drove by it!!

-I think maybe they should play up that First Capitol more. Tie it in with the community more.

-Very nice residential areas.

-I feel that the town would greatly benefit from more promotion of the First State Capital. Has great tourism potential. More emphasis should be put on the site.