

First Impressions

of

Blanchardville, WI

Visit conducted 1-9-93

A program for community improvement

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Livingston, WI

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REPORT INTRODUCTION

We conducted the Livingston "First Impressions" visit of Blanchardville on Saturday, January 9, 1993.

We split into two teams, one of three women and one of two men. We drove through town and also made a walking tour.

Because we visited on a Saturday, we didn't get to talk with anyone at City Hall or the Chamber, but did stop at many businesses.

Although it was a very cold day, we enjoyed our visit. Being so close to the Holidays, many of the homes were still decorated and looked great.

The following is a summary of all five reports. We hope you find our comments beneficial.

"The Livingston Team"

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

I expected an older village of 5-600 people with typical rural type businesses, older buildings, and a quiet atmosphere.

Small, depressed community.

Expected a smaller town. Main Street overwhelmed me for size of town.

A small, hilly community without much for business.

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

Positive:

-County F from North - very attractive homes.

-Hwy 78 from North - attractive Church, cemetery, village park and nice sign.

-Hwy 78 from South - older less attractive homes and businesses.

-County F from Darlington - nice view and sign.

-All entrances had good signs with the exception of County F from Hollandale. Nice, well-kept homes at all entrances.

-Nice looking homes at all entrances. General neat appearing town even though it is wintertime. Hwy 78 entrance - nice signage.

-The entrance by 78 South was very scenic (except for the Quonset Hut), with a nice welcome sign.

-County F South was a beautiful scenic road with a good welcome sign. The road was somewhat slippery to drive on.

-78 North is a pretty, rural entrance. Nelson Farms is a very impressive place. The welcome sign at this entrance is too far into the town. Plus it looks like the remains of a welcome sign still by the side of the road.

-Clean well-kept houses, fairly new.

-Very scenic setting.

-Very good entrance signs.

Negatives:

-County F from North - no village sign.

-County F from Darlington - poor pull out area to look for info sign.

-County F from Hollandale - sign is small, difficult to tell where town begins. No population sign. Nothing to tell you where business district is.

-County F - too small sign identifying Blanchardville.

-From Yellowstone - "awesome view" but road desperately needs repair and poor location for "Welcome sign and scenic view" as there is no parking.

-County F from Hollandale • we were in town before we knew it. Not well marked. The large cemetery looks "lacking" without a fence.

3. As you drive around town your comments on:

Appearance

1. Downtown

Many older buildings most of which were well-kept with remodeled store fronts. The rest might consider remodeling fronts to greatly improve attractiveness. Thk includes side street businesses.

*Downtown "Bit of Norway" could use a facelift. I liked the older buildings, especially those maintained in period. Lots of trash cans are available (they could use a painting). The downtown was clean and generally well-kept. Empty buildings **or** those **used** for storage would look better with colorful shades pulled in the windows **or** perhaps they could be used for arts and crafts displays, etc. to take away the empty, lonely feeling. Bed and Breakfast advertising **needs** improvement. Possibly a neat mural (Northern Exposure style) on the long yellow brick wall of Mid America Dairies. It would help the Bed and Breakfast, **as** well **as** improve the appearance of the downtown in a way fitting with the old-time style. 600 and 603 Main St. could use face lifts and the Quonset Huts on Hwy 78 should be torn down.*

Overall very nice although many stores need paint especially upper stories. New Post Office. Nice looking library and funeral home, Churches. Two beauty shops.

*I was amazed at the amount of business downtown **for** a small community. With the exception of a few (the piano/furniture refinisher) the businesses look good. What a nice looking Post Office. #603 a big brown/green house on Main could be a nice place with some work*

Fair to good. Streets narrow.

2. Residential

Mostly very neat. Older homes appear well maintained Few dumpy, unattractive homes.

Well-kept homes far outweigh poorly kept ones. Inviting new apartment complex

Residential • some beautiful, well-kept homes (even looked good in winter). Unfortunately there were a few badly kept Quonset Huts mixed in. A lot of the homes had Christmas decorations up and they looked great.

Well-kept.

3. Industrial park

Did not notice a park as such, but industrial areas seemed average. A little spiffing up is in order.

None?

Didn't notice specific park site.

Didn't see an industrial park

4. Parks

Very nice.

The park is the single most outstanding feature in Blanchardville. The river and the wide variety of activities make it the ideal location for day trips from surrounding areas and weekend camp-outs. Also makes Blanchardville a much more appealing place to relocate to.

Excellent! What an asset - all the activities offered in a town of this size.

Wonderful Park! A very good variety of activities. I love the walkbridge to the park Chamber of Commerce sign with events, activities and contact phone numbers was good. I was surprised and delighted at the camping facilities. I also want to come back for canoeing.

Very nice, but didn't see any restrooms.

5. Schools

Attractive and well-kept exterior. Parking lot appeared small.

If from out-of-town, it is difficult to know which street to turn on. It would be easy to wind up at the back of the school by mistake. Window treatments in new addition. Extremely shabby and tacky - replace with bright colored blinds (same color throughout) to offset dull cement color. Paint trim, older part of building is nicely maintained

Entrance (one-way) could be better street. Excellent looking bricked in windows in old building. Concrete add-on and service entrance in back - drapes falling down. Windows need paint - window treatments from outside looked in "sad shape":

Much larger than I expected. Very nice, except add-on. Windows in that look shabby. Some new curtains would make such a difference on both front and back entry. Also, something should be done with boarded up windows on brick structure. Benches are a great idea at front of building. I would like to see a bigger sign for the school for "newcomers" like us.

Old - not an eye catcher.

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

Sidewalks and streets o.k. Sewer plant very neat. Ullage Hall and library closed.

*Good repair except **County F** going toward Yellowstone.*

*Sidewalks good Streets were generally **good***

Sidewalks I saw were good. Some of side streets that didn't have sidewalks had good curb and gutter. Ugly trash receptacles are plentiful but need paint.

Looked good

7. Other

Scenic view outside Blanchardville (toward Yellowstone) should be expanded and signs posted before and after it so motorists can prepare to turn. Magnificent view!

*Generally it looked like streets and sidewalks were in **good** repair.*

B. Signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

*Good on **78** North and **F** toward Darlington. I missed the rest.*

Tear down Union 76 billboard and remainder of old "Welcome to Blanchardville" sign.

Generally good, but "generic" looking.

*Most entrances had a nice, big welcome **sign**. County **F** from Hollandale didn't.*

*Nice on **County F** from **North**. Highway **78** sign o.k.*

2. Streets

Good

Very nice and legible - liked because you could read them.

We found street signs which were easily readable.

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

Good

Park o.k. Could be better for entrance.

No hospital, but a nice clinic/pharmacy on Main. It was well marked. I didn't see a lot of signage for the park, but you couldn't miss it.

4. Storefront signs

Mostly good. Grocery should say "Supermarket" etc. "Dicks" doesn't give a hint of what it is.

Liked how they hang over street for easy visibility,

Many extend out from buildings making them easily seen.

Generally pretty good. Easy to read from a car or walking.

Good grocery store but needed a different sign in front.

5. Industrial park

Didn't see a sign.

None.

None.

6. City Hall, police, etc.

OK

Pleasantly surprised to see a police dept. City Hall and police dept centrally located.

Well labeled

All located together in a signed building on Main. We visited on Saturday so City Hall was closed. The Bed and Breakfast was not well marked until you got right to it. Once you found it - it looked great. We found it by accident.

Not open.

7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

Saw little.

The Bed and Breakfast and camping in park are two of Blanchardville's greatest assets, and they provide a place to stay for people wanting to explore the area (and incidentally spend too). Need better signs for the Bed and Breakfast. I would also advertise the park wide and far.

Not in excess.

There is a very poor little sign sitting in front of the piano place on Main St. I can't remember what it advertises, but it needs to be replaced

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

A. City/Village Hall

1. Is there a street map?

City Hall not open on Saturday when we were there.

Not open.

On welcome sign on Hwy 78.

2. Community brochure/directory

Didn't locate a community brochure - although from the interesting community directory in the park, it would appear quite simple to put an effective brochure together. Would have liked to read more of directory in the park, but it was too cold. The history section and car tours looked particularly interesting.

In cafe.

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

Very impressed with the variety of businesses in a town the size of Blanchardville. Nice senior citizens and low income housing. The library looks like it would be great (we were too late to get inside).

Two businesses handed out brochures of their business - done excellently. Has own newspaper.

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

Yes at two welcome signs (one at park).

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

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

None - the bakery and furniture store did hand out brochures.

Yes at Dick's (nice clerk, nice store).

B. Chamber office/visitor info center

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

None located, although noted on village sign that there is a Chamber of Commerce.

Yes, but was not open.

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

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

4. How prepared/helpful were they.

5. Convenient hours?

*Not open **on** Saturday.*

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

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

a. The people I talked with had adequate knowledge of information requested.

a. Very.

a. River Valley Trading Company - excellent.

b. Saether Furniture - excellent.

c. Dicks - good.

d. Gas station - o.k.

*a. All businesses gave recommendations when **asked**.*

*b. Several business owners took time to chat with **us**.*

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

*-Yes, **as** needed*

-N/A.

-Yes.

-They didn't refer me because they answered all my questions.

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

*a. Attitude was good. Retailers *friendly*.*

b. Restrooms at Ioco and Cooptown Mart could be cleaner.

c. Laundromat and Norway Restaurant need to be dressed up a bit.

*a. Friendly, helpful (Dick, River Valley, Saethers Furniture, **Freddies**, grocery store).*

- a. River Valley • excellent.
- b. Saether • excellent.
- c. Dicks • excellent.
- d Attitude poor at gas station.

- a. Saethers Furniture Store is beautiful and the owner a very pleasant, attractive person.
- b. River Valley Trading is a wonderful store with a delightful owner.
- c. Freddie's had a good waitress. The food was good and reasonably priced
- d Dick's owner gave us complimentary calendars.

4. Other comments

- a. Saethers Furniture and River Valley Trading were 1st rate, helpful, friendly.
- b. Too many businesses closed on Saturday.
- a. Would suggest some seasonal businesses for Blanchardville e.g. • antique/craft store, business carrying sweatshirts, t-shirts, hats that promote Blanchardville (develop community slogan). Sporting/camping goods?
- a. River Valley • knew his business, history. Would certainly return to shop and visit.
- b. Saether • same as River Vdley.
- c. Dicks is such as variety store. On outside tells you nothing but a pleasant surprise inside.
- a. I was surprised by how many businesses offered brochures and information.
- b. Nice grocery store.

5. General

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

O.K. Average.

Yes.

Yes • people we talked with were very knowledgeable.

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

Needs: Hardware.

Wide variety • could probably find just about anything you need in town. Maybe Dick's could slowly expand its hardware or sporting/camping goods selection.

I'm impressed! Variety of businesses. Would like to tour Bed and Breakfast.

Very good variety of retail businesses.

C. Are there public restrooms.

At service stations and restaurants.

Noted public restrooms at park

Other than at park?

I found them at the service station and restaurant.

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

Saw none.

Noted one pay phone downtown with phone book

Yes!

*Certainly are! I used the booth on Main Street to check on my ill son.
The phone sounded great and there was a book*

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

N/A.

Didn't notice one.

N/A.

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

River Valley Trading • very nice.

River Valley Trading Company was wonderful • atmosphere, baked goods, informal friendliness of owner. Freddie's had great food at reasonable prices. The sandwich special at \$3.25 was enough for two meals and the whipped cream on top of the hot chocolate made me feel pampered.

Very, very good at Freddie's • like atmosphere. Bakery was excellent.

PICNICS! We wanted to go on a picnic after visiting the River Valley Trading Co, with their nice cheeses, wines and pies.

G. What does community SMELL like?

Didn't notice any offensive odors or sounds.

Rural, had a clean, outdoorsy smell.

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

Just traffic.

Quiet.

It is a quiet town. The sounds were mostly of people talking and some traffic sounds.

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

People were lukewarm and friendly in general. Pleasant but not overly inviting.

*I think the potential for Blanchardville is unlimited. The biggest advantage is the river running through town and the proximity to Yellowstone Lake - lots of potential for tourism industry. We also met several creative, outgoing and **kind** people the short time we were in town - so there are great people resources too!*

Very warm and inviting - certainly will return in summer to explore the community more.

*It was a **very** cold day, but the community was warm and friendly. People there seemed to enjoy talking with us "strangers".*

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

*People at River Valley Trading and Saethers were very friendly and helpful. People at service stations, restaurants and **Dicks** were friendly but a bit laid back*

The people we met were in general friendly, knowledgeable and unique!

All were very friendly and helpful. Left community with a sense of a day "well spent" and hope to visit again in summertime.

*All the people we met were friendly. Especially memorable were: 1) River Valley Trading **Co.** owner - he answered all our questions and offered lots of conversation (we loved the decorating his wife did **on** the shop). 2) Saethers Furniture - the **lady** here was very pleasant - we stayed longer than we should have. I wish her well!*

Friendly.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

*Too many businesses closed **on** Saturday.*

*You have a **very** pleasant community with a lot going for you. But it does seem to be a secret.*

*Town was almost empty until **noon**.*

**WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY
SIX MONTHS FROM NOW**

The bakery, the furniture store, Freddie's and how the community is intersected by the Pecatonica River. I will also remember the wonderful park with camping facilities.

*Neat downtown with variety of businesses. Great park facilities.
Excellent bakery.*

I'll remember the pretty spots such as the library and the steps going up a hill to a Church. The neat walk bridge leading to the park Also that wonderful park And especially the people.

6. Doing it Right!

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

1. Attractive residential areas.
2. Plentiful restaurants.
3. Government services appear very good
4. Saethers and River Valley 1st rate.
5. Comfortable rural type attitude.

1. Several creative and unique businesses to attract tourists. Owners and employees are generally friendly and helpful.
2. Wide variety of businesses and services "from birth to death".
3. Generally well-kept business section, maintaining old-time, small town atmosphere.
4. Incredible Park - If I lived in Blanchardville, I would practically live there with my kids in the summer and I will consider a weekend campout in Blanchardville this coming summer.
5. Proximity to the Pecatonica and Yellowstone Lake make building a thriving tourist trade a realistic possibility.

1. Neat appearance.
2. Wide variety of business for size of town.
3. Excellent park facilities and pool.
4. Housing for low income and elderly.
5. Friendly people.

1. The friendly people.
2. The variety of businesses.
3. Beautiful homes.
4. Wonderful park
5. Good school (active).

1. Well-kept.
2. Most buildings were operating.
3. Surprised at the number of businesses.
4. Surprised there weren't more people in town.

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!

None • sorry.

The woman who owns the furniture store was from the Chicago area. Most of her customers are located outside the Blanchardville area. In our search for businesses to relocate to Livingston, part of our efforts could focus on small businesses that do not necessarily service local people but will still bring income into the community (artists, writers, mail-order businesses, etc.). It would be necessary to emphasize lifestyle in order to attract that type of business. Will discuss it at the next Community Improvement Meeting. Also liked the idea of car tours to local interesting sights and the brochure at the park detailing the history of the community.

Place to present our towns brochure promoting business opportunities, our lovely parks and friendly town.