



# ***FIRST IMPRESSIONS***

A Program for Community  
Assessment and Improvement

City of Chilton, WI  
&  
City of Kewaunee, WI

Coordinated by;

***Jerry Braatz, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Calumet County and  
Nadine Boltz, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Kewaunee County***

**Kewaunee Participants**

Jim Abrahamson  
Ann Short

**Chilton Participants**

Greg Garton      Diane Thorson  
Derek McDermott      Roy VanGheem

# ***First Impressions: A Program For Community Assessment and Improvement***

## **A View of Your Community Through the Eyes of a Visitor**


Sometimes it is difficult to see ourselves (communities) as others (customers/visitors, potential residents, potential businesses) see us. Our views are skewed by over familiarization, lack of differing perspectives and expectations, and a reluctance to be completely honest with our neighbors.

In 1991, the First Impressions Program was created by the University of Wisconsin-Extension as a community assessment tool. This program allows volunteers from two somewhat similar communities to do unannounced exchange visits and to report their findings. Over 150 communities from states throughout the Midwest have participated in this program, which has been helpful in evaluating how outsiders view their communities. The University of Wisconsin-Extension coordinates the First Impressions Program in Wisconsin and provides guidelines and reporting manuals to volunteers. The guidelines insure that evaluations are thorough and uniform.

In July 1997, the Chilton Chamber of Commerce Visual Improvements Committee, received information about the First Impressions Program from Jerry Braatz, Calumet County University of Wisconsin Community Development Educator. The Visual Improvements Committee decided to participate in this program. Jerry Braatz sent electronic mail messages that provided information about Chilton and mentioned that the city was seeking a First Impressions partner. The City of Kewaunee expressed interest in participating in a First Impressions Program with Chilton. Further discussion with Nadine Boltz, Kewaunee County UW-Extension Community Development Educator, revealed that Kewaunee was somewhat similar to Chilton. At this point, the First Impressions Program was planned and dates were scheduled. Volunteers from Chilton made an unannounced visit to Kewaunee, Wisconsin, on Tuesday, October 28, 1997. A group from Kewaunee made their visit to Chilton on Monday November 24, 1997. Each group completed an assessment and recorded their comments, thoughts, and recommendations.

Enclosed you will find the First Impressions reports for Chilton and Kewaunee. I trust that this information will be useful to you. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (920) 849-1450 or [jerold.braatz@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:jerold.braatz@ces.uwex.edu).

Sincerely,



Jerry Braatz  
Community Resource Development Educator  
UW-Extension, Calumet County

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# SUMMARY

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## NEGATIVE IMPRESSIONS

### **City of Chilton**

- Growth and expansion did not appear to be planned, just happened.
- Retail sections of city are all spread out. Difficult to define areas of the community
- Uptown and downtown could use a facelift, buildings and clean up.
- Direction signs to attractions and services need to be added and improved.
- No direction sign to City Hall, and Chamber of Commerce sign is too small.
- High school could use more off street parking.
- Community brochure needs a city map.

### **City of Kewaunee**

- Lack of a city map that identifies hospitals, schools, parks, Courthouse, City Hall, and the Chamber of Commerce. Very difficult to find these facilities.
- Industrial areas did not look like they were expanding.
- Downtown storefronts and buildings need renovation.
- Little evidence of ADA compliance with buildings in the downtown.
- Large trees blocked the view of downtown lighting and storefronts.
- Some of the older homes are in need of repairs and renovation.
- Chamber of Commerce building was difficult to reach on foot.

# **First Impressions Of Chilton**

**\* \* \* \* \***

**A  
Community Improvement  
Program**

Conducted by residents of Kewaunee, Wisconsin on November **24**, 1997

## PROFILE OF KEWAUNEE VISITORS

**Jim Abrahamson** - City Councilman, Owner of The Duvall House Bed and Breakfast, mayoral candidate.

**Ann Short** - Independent Sales Representative for Manufacturing Machinery Firms, Owner of The Milwaukee House Bed and Breakfast, Chamber Member.

**Nadine Boltz** - University of Wisconsin - Extension, Community Development Educator for Kewaunee County.

## DATE OF VISIT AND TIME SPENT

The group visited Chilton on Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, a beautiful fall day - clear and brisk. We arrived at approximately 11 a.m. and departed about 3:00 p.m.

## GENERAL SUMMARY

The group was very impressed by the amount of retail activity for a small town. All noticed the impressive business park and the general tidiness of the community.

*As you approach the community.....*

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

A small town, approximately the same population. Didn't "expect" anything, except I knew of the 3-4 light manufacturers located there.

*Typical Wisconsin town - no extraordinary expectations.*

Expected to find a town similar to Kewaunee; same amount of retail, business, etc.

### **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.*

I entered from the North. Nothing great stood out, except that there was no welcome sign drawing your attention to the fact that you were there. Sign was cluttered, not inviting. First impression - the usual small town, something old, something new. Expansion and changes did not appear to "planned". Just happened. Entry from the

South is much more attractive; some business development going on, looked more prosperous.

*Very spread out, clean, orderly. Retail stores widely spaced at opposite entrances to city - little retail at center of town - large industrial park area well laid out.*

Retail sections of city are all over, difficult to define areas of community. Many entrances to community.

**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.***

### **III. Driving...evaluate EACH entrance.**

I did this above in II.

*Hwy 57 North - city signs are too far out and seem cluttered.*

*W Main - clean, neat, not well signed, Older buildings need cleaning up. A uniform remodeling project would help appearance. What's the goal for downtown??? Office buildings, specialty shops, a mix of both??? Signing and promoting as such could be very attractive.*

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

The River and diagonal streets make it difficult to find businesses. Downtown could use a facelift; appears to be partially empty of businesses.

**Signage** to Court House, Police Station, etc. not posted. (I may have missed it.) Very little downtown parking for businesses.

*Seemed split into two areas - attractive banks, post office, etc. one way - old, largely vacated retail area other way.*

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

Beginning of another business area (retail) south end of town (Econo-Foods). (New Gas Stations, Mini-Marts) Fresh and neat appearing. Must be a prosperous community to support the new stores, and several banks, and an aggressive business plan.

*Really spread out - too far to walk between major retail outlets.*

## **V. Driving...comments on residential:**

Average for a small community of this size. Older areas well kept; new sub-divisions have quality homes, indicates a pride in the community.

*Well maintained homes.*

Nice, well kept. Streets appear wide because of the set back of trees *off* of terrace. I like that.

## **VI. Driving...comments on:**

### **a. street signs**

Not great.

*Signs directing to specific attractions or services. Definitely need to be added or improved.*

### **b. traffic patterns/street conditions**

Traffic pattern was not easy, due to the River, angle streets. Not extremely difficult, however, due to the size of the town.

*Traffic pattern confusing because of layout of town. (More signs) But in **good** condition.*

Traffic flowed well through a busy downtown

### **c. welcome signs (at entrances)**

From the North, could be more inviting. From the South, quite nice in park area. Could use some creativity.

*I thought the large reasonably attractive welcome signs were diminished by all the other signs surrounding them and attached to them - rather distracting from welcome message - too busy!*

Too much mix of organizations and welcome. **It's** my personal opinion that welcome signs should stand alone.

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

Hospital - great, easy to see. Others were OK - nothing special that I recall. But, there were signs, so you didn't have to guess what a building was when you came upon it.

*No sign to City Hall even though it seemed hidden on a side street.*

Chamber office sign is very small and we had a difficult time locating it even though we had a map. No city hall sign. We stopped to ask the name of the river - couldn't locate a sign.

**VII. Driving...comments on industrial park/area (Sign well defined ,busy, growing, new, etc.)**

Signs defined, appeared to be growing, nice area.

*Very impressive - new, growing, good layout, good access.*

Well Done!! Great signage. Looks beautiful, growing and prosperous.

**VIII. Driving..comments on schools:**

Both public and parochial. Well marked, well kept up.

*Public: modern, well maintained, very good appearance.*

*Parochial: seemed congested in old area.*

Nice looking schools, beautiful sports bowl. High school looks like it could use more parking.

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

Adequate, well kept for the size of the community.

*General very good appearance with possible exception of some remote areas along river.*

Fairgrounds looks well kept with a traditional fair feeling. Didn't notice many parks except along West Main area.

**X. Driving ... comments on other:**

Street signs were not easy to read; same for numbers on some buildings.

**a. Hospitals/clinics**

Attractive, no negatives here.

*Appeared to be average for size of town; hospital directions posted. Easy to read.*

**b. billboards/advertising**

Not so many that they were an eyesore. Seems about the right amount, same as most communities.

*No negative comment except that they should be kept clear of city welcome sign.*

**c. Other**

The expansion to the South, as well as other areas, did not seem to be planned. Just happened with no continuity.

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

Didn't do much. Downtown walking might have been a problem with so little parking available. Downtown did not give the impression one wanted to walk around. A place to get your business done and go, if one had business there.

*Not much area to walk around. Most retail is drive up.*

The **old** downtown area seemed pretty dead. Storefronts now occupied by services instead of retail. Some good **old** architecture hidden by poorly declining overlays.

**XII. Walking around...comments on people: Were they friendly, did they know answers to questions, did they try to help, appearance, etc.**

People we talked to were friendly, helpful, not suspicious, pleased to be asked about their town. Knew the answers we wanted.

*All we talked to seemed very friendly and helpful. I was most impressed.*

Very friendly, anxious to answer and be helpful.

**XIII. Community information: Comments on .....**

**a. community brochure (tourist type)**

Community brochure was excellent, with both business and tourist type information.

*Very good - filled with substantial information and business listings.*

**b. businesses/attractions brochures or directory**

Same as above.

*Kaytee Avian Education Center - attractive and inviting.*

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

Same as above.

*Typical Wisconsin Public Service Community profile. Very complete information.*

**d. map**

We had a map which was helpful. Picked up a Calumet County Map.

*Probably be good idea to add to city brochure. Didn't receive one at Chamber of Commerce.*

**e. other (i.e. bulletin/notice tourism, etc.)**

Information at the Court House and City Hall was available, with friendly personnel who answered our questions without hesitation. Never felt as though we were intruding on their time. Went out of their way.

*Almost impossible to find Chamber of Commerce. Needs better signage.*

**XIV. City Hall, describe your visit:**

**a. appearance of facility, including signing**

New Building. Nothing elaborate, but an attractive, functional building. Signs were appropriate and easy to locate in the building. Outside were fine.

*Very attractive - one year old.*

Beautiful building!

**b. helpfulness of staff**

Excellent everywhere we visited. Welcomed our visit.

*Excellent.*

Extremely helpful.

**c. other**

The friendliness of the people in this community made a good impression. They welcomed our questions and knew the answers.

*Little use of windows in general office areas. Like working in basement.*

Nice combination facilities.

## **XV. Chamber of Commerce..describe your visit**

Address was difficult to find, small sign.

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

Yes. It was still difficult as it was tucked away in the corner of another office space. Suggest sign on corner, at entrances to city. Or a way to get people there.

Yes.

Yes.

### **b. comment on information available**

Once we got there, it was great. We received an abundance of written materials about the area, places to eat, businesses, recreation, etc. a well kept secret.

*None on display - but were given city brochure and Kaytee brochure.*

Kind of unorganized, but good amount of materials.

### **c. comment on staff**

Knowledgeable, friendly, helpful, enthusiastic about the area.

*Very helpful,*

Very friendly.

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

Location was not good - downtown, small area in another office, small sign, not much parking. I do not like to criticize, however, because I know some Chambers do not have a lot of money or members. Perhaps it is the best they can do at this time. They did well with what they had, **as** we left there with all of our questions and inquiries answered and a packet of stuff.

*Very cramped office - shared with another business.*

## **XVI. Other stuff.....**

### **a. public restrooms (availability, condition, etc.)**

None that I remember, except at the Court House and City Hall.

*One at Lions Club River Park - closed for season.*

Noticed at River Park.

**b. pay phones (working, phone books intact, etc.)**

Didn't check.

*Didn't check.*

Didn't notice.

**c. parking**

Downtown, limited. Elsewhere, appeared to be adequate.

*Didn't see a problem, seemed adequate.*

**d. water fountains, benches, etc.**

Don't remember. It was not the water fountain or bench season.

*Very attractive; at bank corner downtown.*

**e. Other**

The Chamber in most communities has responsibility for tourism, and working with businesses, as well as attracting more business. **If** that is the case, then they are successful with an Industrial Park, several prosperous companies, all attractive and thriving.

**WRAP UP**

**A. Using your "senses"...**

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

Average.

*Unable to comment on this. I had no taste while there.*

Average lunch.

**2. What does this community SMELL like?**

**OK.**

*Malt.*

There was a smell that I knew, and had smelled before. It turned out to be malt or a brewery smell. Faint, not overpowering or objectionable.

**3.What SOUNDS did you hear?**

None that I recall.

*None annoying.*

Traffic, very busy.

**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.)**

Typical small town, people going about their business, certainly not crowded or any traffic problems, I felt it was not reaching its potential in attractiveness. Bird Aviary is best attraction, but it was not open. Very little else would take me back there as a tourist, or visitor.

*Inviting - I had a good feeling about the community.*

Mixed— somewhat confusing. Retail, service and industrial all mixed together ... unfocused might be a better description.

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

1. Residential areas neat & well-kept. Almost no "For-Sale" signs.
2. Positive growth is going on.
3. Mix of Light Factory, other business ("Malt", Cheese Factory)
4. River is attractive and an asset.
5. People were friendly and proud of their community.

- 1. Friendly, helpful people.*
- 2. Neat, clean, well maintained.*
- 3. New, growing residential and industrial areas.*
- 4. Good access roads and streets.*
- 5. Planning for continued growth was in evidence.*

1. Great industrial park, well organized.
2. Neat and clean homes.
3. Friendly folks.

**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:**

Newsletter for the City of Kewaunee

*I particularly liked the City of Chilton newsletter (annual I surmise) - full of useful information for its citizens. Also the small card listing all the members of municipal committees and elected officials - easy to do.*

Fundraising idea - Hospital Auxillary afghans.

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

The 3 customers I already have there.

And, I will visit the Kaytee Avian Research Center, as well as the caves.

*A town surrounded by open farm fields - unlimited expansion space. Served by several roads and highways.*

Kaytee Aviary - I visited on a previous trip.

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

I kept doing comparisons between Kewaunee and Chilton and Kewaunee came out better, not just because it is my home. We have the most natural beauty with Lake Michigan, the bluffs and a rich history of shipping, lumbering etc. But, I did a search all over the state prior to moving here. I would move to Chilton, if invited; if it was my intention to go into a light manufacturing business, but not a tourist-oriented business. And, here we have the best of both, a great place to live and work.

*Probably not a place I would purposely move to - but a good place to live and raise a family if you were employed there. I would be favorable impressed to locate a business or industry there.*

Very few homes for sale!!! Every one must like living here.

# SUMMARY

## POSITIVE IMPRESSIONS

### **City of Chilton**

- Impressive industrial park
- A great amount of retail activity for a small city.
- Older homes are well maintained.
- New subdivisions have quality homes.
- Attractive schools.
- Excellent community brochure.
- New city hall with extremely helpful staff.
- Very helpful and friendly staff at the Calumet County Courthouse and Chilton Chamber of Commerce.
- Friendly and helpful citizens.
- Kaytee Aviation Center - attractive and inviting.

### **City of Kewaunee**

- Kewaunee is the County Seat.
- Community hospital is a plus.
- Three nice hotel/motel establishments in the community and a Bed and Breakfast.
- Major new high school development.
- Karsten Motel was entirely renovated; delightful facility.
- Historic district was attractive.
- Tourism theme was evident throughout the city.
- Topography and Lake Michigan.