

*New Hampton's Visit to Cresco*  
*Report to Mari Ann McDuff*  
*New Hampton Contact – Karen Amundson*

***Profile of Team:***

Male – Banker – 20's  
Male – Salesman – 30's  
Female – City Employee – 50's  
Female – Public Relations for Bank – 30's  
Female – Office Manager – 40's

Date of Visit: **October 10, 2000**  
Weather: Beautiful, crisp fall day  
Time: Arrived into town about 9:40 a.m. and left about **2:45 p.m.**

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

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

- I expected Cresco to be rural with a nice standard of living.
- When I think of Cresco I think of a sports-minded community.
- I expected a small town atmosphere. I had been to Cresco once a long, long time ago and I remembered no restaurants and kind of expected that again. Snowmobile capital of Northeast Iowa.
- My expectation was blue collar, and the only thing I know about Cresco was that they had a neat facility center.
- I expected a neat, tidy community with a quaint Main Street.

***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 thought Highway 9 (entrance from the west) was tough looking. Welcome signs hard to read. Liked the **Park** with the Train. I thought Highway 9 was the Main Street. Was busy looking at train and **missed** Main Street entrance. Very rough looking once you get right past Subway. Loved the football field and the fact you could see it from the highway. Very impressed with bike trail
- Highway 9 presents a poor first impression. I feel **bad** for you because it **is** a beautification challenge that isn't a small undertaking. It needs some major clean up. So many of the parking lots weren't paved on the west end, **making** for a dusty mess on this breezy day.
- ~ Welcome signs too full, can't read them. Didn't see the business district. where's Main Street, is this highway Main Street? East end of Highway 9 entering town is much nicer looking than west end Liked the train.
- Missed the welcome sign. I noticed right away there were **no** banners. **Why** does the west entrance on highway 9 **seem** so crowded?
- Was so fascinated with the industry (ie. pallet place and greenhouse, camp site) the rest got over looked. I kept **thinking**, what a great place for welcome banners. I missed the entrance to **the** Main Street business district, was there a sign? Very nice development happening with Super 8 and the new office building behind it. **REC** building **is** nice looking coming from the east.

### 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.

Go about ½ - 1 mile out each road and return. List each road (61 North, etc.) and list positive and negatives for each.

#### **Protivin Road -**

- Signage needs work, clean looking until trailer court.
- Coining into town from the south, really noticed the welcome signs, Weeds growing up to it, pretty blah.
- Beautiful countryside. Another area where banners would be nice.
- Need more banners or welcoming atmosphere here.

#### **Granger Road -**

- Noticed the weeds growing up around the welcome sign. Very plain entrance, not doing anything wrong, just no comment needed.
- Tennis court and pool area - BIG YUK!
- Still don't like the Welcome Sign appearances. Homes look neat and tidy. Pride is evident.
- Pretty plain entrance, liked the park once you got past the old pool area.
- Pool area looks bad, and dangerous. Noticed the beautiful leaves.

#### **Industrial Park Road - don't know if you consider this exit/entrance but we drove it out a mile anyway.**

- Very nice area. Neat and well kept.
- Very typical of industrial park road No real comments except "is there room for growth? Where does new industry go?"
- Very neat, was surprised there was so little industry.
- Was fascinated with the fair grounds - they looked nice.
- ~ Noticed the racetrack more than the industry. Featherlite was a neat clutter if that makes sense.

#### **Highway 9 West**

- When we went back for a longer look than the First Impression, I was intrigued with how much was right, but how much needed work. A real hodge podge area.
- Still think Highway needs work. This is really your biggest business area isn't it?
- ~ A little clean up and paving driveway ordinance would be great here. Now when I'm observing the second time I wonder, why I didn't notice the Main Street. That building (bank) is huge!
- Noticed the Welcome Building this time. Nice looking. We had a red light this time and I saw the Main Street, beautiful leaves.
- Very cluttered entrance.

### IV (a) Driving...evaluate the downtown business area:

(Signs, appearance, size, etc.)

- Once we found the downtown, I was impressed. The big bank is really stately, but almost makes the rest of the area look dwarfed. Never noticed many signs.
- Elm Street area very nice and neat. Like the cornstalks.
- Storefronts look good for most part. The architectures are all very different. Did notice some really dirty windows downtown. Like the old fashioned lights. Liked the theatre, but that street looks kind of lonely. Dryclean building gives it a ghost town look.
- Didn't like the modern siding on older buildings - I'm a brick & mortar fan. The big bank really dominates Elm Street - that would be okay if the rest had the same flair or style, which of course is impossible, but it sure stands out. Pretty courthouse. Love the fact your courthouse is right on your Main Street.
- The cornstalks give you a real sense that people work together. Love the period lighting and brick sidewalk trim. Can't say we noticed much signage in this area. Theatre is awesome - you're lucky to have, hope everyone appreciates it and patronizes it!!!

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

Since your entrances on Highway 9 are your other business areas, we won't repeat our reports here.

We did think that somehow people miss the little business street that runs just north of Fareway, as well as the one that runs just South of the Court House lawn. Nice little strips.

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

- ~ Very "normal" residential areas for a town **this** size. Love the **older** and well-maintained homes on Elm Street.
- Nice mix of new and old residential – you're spread out. Pride in your homes and yards is evident throughout. The south side of town looks tough in spite of some new housing sprinkling **up** here and there. Nice apartments on far south side.
- Some of your areas are very nice, but then have a dud sprinkled in here and there. Big Victorian homes are great.
- ~ Noticed the very **nice**, wide streets. Beautiful older homes and interesting architecture here. Looks very hometown.
- ~ Loved the new housing development north east of town. Beautiful trees everywhere.

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

### **a. Street signs**

- The group noticed the street signs with street names. very adequate. Other signage wasn't noticed

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

- Everyone commented on the street patterns. Flow seemed just fine other than the confusion over the spread out business district.
- Condition of the roads weren't bad, just a couple of rough ones.

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

~ Unfortunately no one on the team gave your welcome signs the thumbs up. They look bare **in** the sense that there is no landscaping around them. but the sign itself is too much reading (that's typical of many signs). We all commented on the fact that towns used to **try** and tell their whole history on a welcome sign, but the new ones just state the name of the town and that's it. We wondered how old yours were. One team member commented that the ones on highway 9 should be out of town a **bit** further so they are easier noticed.

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

If our driver hadn't been familiar with Cresco. we never would have found the parks or the fitness center. Don't remember any signs about police station or city **hall** except when **we** got there. We did all notice the hospital sign on highway 9 the second time through, but for some reason missed it on the Granger road??

## **VII. Driving... comments on industrial park/area:**

**Sign well defined...busy...growing...new...etc.**

~ Since we considered this **an** entrance our report is on the entrance portion. One team member ads that fair grounds are hard to make look nice, but this was the nicest they'd seen. Very nice.

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

- ~ High school was **clean** nice. Clean looking, one of the finest **I've** seen. Why is the **trim** orange? Aren't the Crestwood colors blue? Catholic elementary looked small and crowded, not safe from the front.
- ~ Very nice, liked that they were off by themselves at the edge of town – gives you a safe feeling. I give the schools an A+.
- Nice and neat looking. Wondered if there was enough parking for activities.
- Nice layout. The entrance was confusing. Like that they have separate entrances for the two schools – safer. Parking looked to be a problem. I remember walking through residential last time we came here to a game.
- Schools looked very nice. I'd have a hard time putting my elementary child in the parochial when the public looks so much nicer and safer.

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

- Parks are adequate, sure too bad you don't have some bigger play equipment for the luds. Fitness Center is awesome.
- Although limited. the parks you have are **nice**. The central park with the tram is well kept and nice. Fantastic Fitness Center.
- Athletic facility is wonderful. We had a wonderful tour by a very friendly staff person. Parks are okay, the nicest parts of them are the softball/baseball complexes. Love the train park.
- ~ Sure like the softball complex at Evans, but there's not much to do in the park area for luds. Kessel Park was my favorite. Like the train. That park must be a hit with the **kids**.
- Your parks are nice, all clean and well kept. Playground equipment in need of fixing up. I think I'm the only one who doesn't care for the train. Makes me feel the park is 1/2 junkyard

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

### **a. Hospitals/dinics**

All team members agreed the hospital and clinic look very nice and appealing. A very professional appearance.

### **b. Billboards/advertising**

All team members commented that there weren't many billboards, but that they weren't missed.

## ***XI. Walking around..comments on businesses (physical part):***

### **Appearance, displays, signs, etc**

- Chamber was very willing to sent info, very courteous, clean and unique office.
- Difficult to cross street at 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. and Elm - stop light needed.
- Courthouse employees were courteous, even though it's an old building, it's very well kept up.
- ~ Leutholds, late response, but did receive a greeting. Neat, clean store. We spent money. seller was a bit too high pressure.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Aspenson Realty, no greeting, no "may I help you", no goodbye or thank you, very cold. We were potential buyers!!
- City Hall - great look, friendly staff.
- Library, beautiful facility. Didn't really get greeted. Neat fundraiser. silent auction.
- Pamida, needs work rough looking. Inside is nice and clean. Hard to find, check out person was not friendly.
- Fortress Bank, very clean, very helpful, was greeted by 3 or 4 different people. Lots of smiles - A+.
- ~ Most people were very friendly, gave you a warm feeling.
- Some of the older buildmgs need rehab. Don't like the vinyl siding and the modenlization on buildings.
- City flags or banners would be great on Highway 9. The few you have are small, dark and make no impact with the amount you have.
- Retail area looks good, There were some really *dirty* windows, but if I remember right the building **may** have been unoccupied.
- Shocks around light poles was a very nice touch. Store people friendly for the most part.
- Erickson Prohaska Realty, no greeting, very cold. We even were "potential customers."
- Burke Real Estate - finally, a realtor that wanted to talk with us. Fran, very nice, knowledgeable and not pushy.
- City Hall people were extremely helpful and friendly.
- Chamber Office was closed when we went there. Group 1 **did** visit there.
- ~ We ate at Prime nDine. Waitress was nice but didn't smile. Are strangers rare? We were certainly stared at, made us uncomfortable.
- ~ We noticed that there were several of your smaller retail businesses that have obviously seen a **need** for an extra service or line and added it, even though it might not have **been** in the original product **mix**. This was an idea that we need to share with our own retailers. An example would be the floral shop that also had the photo developing area. Good Job!

## ***XII. Walking around..comments on people:***

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

- People in Cresco are very warm and friendly for the most part.
- Realtors need to train their reception people on how to greet people. That is sometimes the first stop a potential citizen or new business makes.
- ~ Fitness Center staff was by far the most friendly and welcoming.
- ~ City Hall people were also favorites.

## ***XIII. Community Information***

~ Community information and brochures were very adequate. Willingness to make them available was evident

### **b. Businesses/attractions brochures or directory**

~ Very good, very adequate.

### **c. Community profile (demographic, industrial type information for prospective business people, etc.**

~ Adequate

d. Map

- We were not given a map of Cresco. Not sure if the team asked for one either.

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

- a. Appearance of facility, including signing
- b. Helpfulness of staff
- c. Other

- See other are of report, this information was included in the walking portion. All of the team members were impressed with the City Hall and it's appearance as well as the helpfulness of the staff.

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

- a. Did people know where it was (or who to refer you to?)
- b. Comment on information available
- c. Comment on staff
- d. Other (hours, appearance, locations, etc.)

- Again this report is included in the walking portion. One team visited the Chamber office and was pleasantly greeted and helped to their satisfaction. The other team went over the lunch hour and it was closed.

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

- a. **Public** restrooms (available, condition, etc.)

-Noticed the public restrooms by city hall. Condition was suitable.

- b. Pay phones (working, phone book intact, etc.)

~ The team never found pay phones, but forgot to look until the end of the visit.

- c. Parking

- Parking seemed to be very adequate city-wide. It was difficult to find a spot on Highway 9 and the side street by the Chamber office.

- d. Water fountains, benches, etc.

~ We did notice there were no benches, or didn't see any.

- e. Other

**WRAP UP**

- A. Using your "senses" ..

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

~ Didn't notice any specialty foods, that was lacking.

- Food at Prime 'n Dine was very good.

~ Sweet 'n Sour Sauce. Elm Street is sweet. Your homes and quality of living are sweet. Your highway 9 problems are sour.

- 2. What does the community SMELL like?

~ Fresh Fall Day. very crisp.

~ Hot corn chips - corn drying.

### 3. What SOUNDS did you hear?

- ~ Quiet and peaceful
- ~ Grain Elevators, trucks, traffic
- It sounded 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.)

- Group consensus was a warm, friendly small town atmosphere, much like we are used to living in. There were a couple of people on the team who were really bothered by the highway 9 appearance, that it is so misleading as to how very nice and quaint your community is. When someone from the team stated that it isn't something they can **fix** the other members thought that there were several areas that could be addressed. For example, banners, paving driveways, cleaning up some of the areas, and **perhaps** relocating some of the less desirable looking businesses off the "main drag." They felt that by putting banners or flags on 9 and down North Elm, it might create a corridor to the beautiful business district on Elm. You're doing so much right. It's a shame not to address the issue.

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

*(We give you 8!)*

1. Fitness Center
2. Historic Library building, wonderfully renovated
3. Beautiful Trees
4. Nice retail and industrial mix
5. Beautiful golf course
6. Nature Center
7. Appearance of schools
8. Major highway access

### 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:

- We want to steal the silent auction idea, it just won't be done in the next 72 hours.
- We also want to steal your fitness facility.

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

~ The fitness facility x 5!

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

The team all agreed, it's very, very hard to be critical even though this is the purpose of the visit. You're doing so **many** good things. It was a great day for us. We enjoyed our visit. We also now look at our own community much more critically - we too have a major highway with some much needed clean up with many of the same issues to address! How often we get used to looking at this and no longer "see" it!

Keep up the good work Cresco!