

First impressions

of

Evansville, WI

by Cuba City, WI

Visit conducted 9/10/91

A program for community improvement

Developed by:

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REPORT INTRODUCTION

The First Impressions visit of Evansville by Cuba City was conducted on Tuesday, September 10, 1991.

The five member Cuba City team profile:

- 4 men and 1 woman
- 2 are connected to city government
- 1 is involved in education
- 2 are business people
- All are currently of working age and actively employed
- Combination of lifelong residents and "moved to the area".

The weather was beautiful when we arrived around 9:30 a.m. and only became overcast as we were leaving around 1:00 p.m. or so.

We had two teams and one individual making visits. There was some overlap with places visited, but not completely. We took turns driving around for visual impressions and then hoofing it around the business district.

We also had sent an anonymous request for community info through the mail. Your response was the best I have seen. It was prompt and useful!!

The city map is a very effective piece. Your choice of black and white is fine because it keeps costs down, but does not hinder the usefulness.

The historical walking tour pamphlet was the best piece of its type I have ever encountered. The script blends just the right amount of architectural, historical and human interest information. Whoever did that deserves a statue in your beautiful park!!

The following pages provide a composite of the five individual reports. If further explanation is required on any of these (i.e. in our comments the term "brochure" refers to the community profile packet handed out at City Hall), I invite you to contact me at 608-822-3501.

It was a pleasure visiting your community. May all your "First Impressions" be winning ones!

James L. Schneider, Executive Director

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

When Dick first asked me about going, I was very excited about it. I first thought we were going there and someone was going to show us around town. I think this approach was much more beneficial for not only the community we were looking at, but also for us.

Was not familiar with the community - expected similarities to Cuba City because of similar population.

I expected Evansville to be a bedroom town of our size facing about the same economic Main Street problems we have. And about the same industry growth as us.

Commuter town - close to Madison/Janesville - a little bigger than Cuba City.

I had been through the city before but had not stopped. I expected a small community that would be impacted by its closeness to Madison/Janesville/Monroe and also impacted by being somewhat "off the beaten path." There is no immediate recognition factor when 'Evansville is mentioned' (i.e. "Oh, that's where _____")

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

We came in on Hwy 59, which apparently is the only entrance without a sign.

Positive:

The entrance from both sides of Highway 14 were much better than the way we came in on 59. The one I especially liked was the one constructed on the golf course by the FFA.

From North - very nice entrance - golf course - welcome sign (FFA) was exceptionally nice. From East - nice entrance sign.

City welcome sign, neat and clean, trees, good street surfaces.

On a 1 to 10:
North on 14 - 9
South on 59 - 6
East on East Main - 8
West on West Main - 8

No junk yard - relatively clean - beautiful trees.

The approaches all are clean and basically inviting. No major eyesores. My partners commented very favorably.

Negatives:

Not much of a welcome or sign of any sort from Highway 59 entrance.

Nothing that a little polishing and picking up wouldn't correct.

Lack of welcome signs • accomplishments, what they're proud of, could use an explanation of the term "Grove":

None that I saw.

3. As you drive around town your comments on:

Appearance

1. Downtown

The main street area could use a general sprucing up. Some storefronts needed painting and better use of the larger window should be considered. There were lots of areas in the front of buildings where grass and weeds were growing up.

Obviously an "old" community, buildings in fairly good repair, but could use some sprucing up. Banners on downtown poles are nice.

Fair, the building designs are there but need work, paint, windows missing. Example • big beautiful windows in Grange Store with white boards filling them.

Bigger than expected. Grange is impressive - no directory or guide.

Good collection of older buildings • mostly well kept, mostly occupied. Like intro of trees into downtown with grates and protectors. Buildings all appear to have been rehabilitated a while ago and some of that work needs some touching up!!

2. Residential

I was very impressed with the residential areas. There is new construction in almost all areas of town. The upkeep in older areas was very evident. Many owners have taken real pride in these homes. The trees in this town are just unbelievable.

Very clear, well-kept areas. Shows a lot of pride in City. Some areas need landscaping, curb & gutter, etc., • just general upkeep.

In general homes look very neat.

Generally well kept up. Some big wonderful houses • positive new homes • growth.

What a magnificent collection of older homes • pride of ownership is evident throughout. Trees set a "home town" and warm feeling.

3. Industrial park

This area was very hard to recognize. There was a sign on the edge, but did not really show much area.

Not distinctive.

Need two-sided signs

? - *Not much* - but other factories were clean and kept up.

I expected more after seeing the rest of your community. It looks like it's "ready to go" but looks a little neglected. You know how you clean up the house when company is expected? I got the feeling that your industrial park isn't expecting guests soon.

4. Parks

By far the most impressive thing I saw in this town. For a town this size to have a complex that nice is phenomenal. There is a lot of pride here and it shows.

Exceptional park at Lake Lester.

Name Heotag

A ten!

Maybe the best selling point. One of the best in the State for a town this size.

That is one of the finest community parks I have ever seen. Any community that would do that for itself is A - OK

5. Schools

By ~~sc~~ schools looked to be very nice and well kept. There were very little signs directing you to schools and access to them was not the best.

Appeared to be in good condition, but could be difficult to find.

Looks good but hard to get to high school because you can't drive all the way around it.

Average in appearance. Lacks "identity" - rough on edges.

Basically good looking - some small maintenance details being overlooked (i.e. exposed insulation by air conditioner - district office side.)

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

Streets seemed to be fairly good. The sidewalks in some areas had cracks. Overall, not bad.

Good.

Streets and sidewalks look pretty good. Main Street weeds should be sprayed in cracks.

Again, trees, trees, trees, very homey and soft. The rest is just average.

All sidewalks and streets appeared to be in good condition • I expected antique lighting after seeing the rest of town.

7. Other

What's with the boarded up house by the high school? Trees • trees • trees • trees • trees - just beautiful.

B. Signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

Very impressed with Highway 14 signs • there were none on Highway 59.

Very good entrance signs from North and East.

Very good.

Needs more positive sell, mix of junky and well-kept businesses. Clean up or cover up junky ones.

I only came in on 59 • No sign. Didn't see other entrances.

2. Streets

Overall, they were pretty good.

Good • liked "Historic District" added to sign posts.

Very good.

Very good. Great highways. Rest is good.

Signs in place and well maintained. I liked the "Historical District" add ons.

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

Saw no signs directing you to hospital, parks, or any of the schools.

None.

Not good for medical or parks.

Good knowledge of those talked to.

Sadly lacking.

4. Storefront signs

Many of the store front signs were mounted directly to the fronts. When looking for a business while driving up the street it's very hard to find them.

Many on buildings - hard to distinguish buildings identity.

Fair, because of flat store signs, some should post in windows or doors.

Mix of very good, average and poor. Need uniformity. I personally am not a lighted sign fan.

I like the flat signs, but you need to compliment that with pedestrian eye level signs in the windows. Many signs need maintenance - not sharp. Functional but not imaginative or "catchy"!

5. Industrial park

Small sign - not impressive.

One sign - difficult to know what area was in the park until looking at map.

Need two-sided signs

???

Sign was like the Industrial Parkit was there and served a purpose, but it wasn't up to your community standards.

6. City Hall, police, etc.

There were absolutely no signs at all.

No sign - definitely needed - area is available for an attractive sign in front of the building.

Very poor, guessed because squad car out front.

Nice looking police cars.

None - Zip - Nada.....and little direction once you get inside (what's in that mystery building).

7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

Can't recall seeing any!

Not many - no clutter from signs.

Good - not too many to make things look junky.

Not over done. But not award material. Better than average.

Nothing that caught my eye or, more importantly, that detracted from the city.

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

A. City/Village Hall

1. Is there a street map?

Yes, very good map and was given to us with city brochure.

Yes, easy to read, included a great deal of community information.

Yes, good.

N.A.

City map is well done - clear and useful - nothing I would change.

2. Community brochure/directory

Very impressed with brochure. Their layout and design was excellent.

Excellent.

Very good.

N.A.

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

Just what was included with brochure.

Excellent, especially liked easily changed inserts.

Very good.

N.A.

This packet was very well done.

4. Recommendations on place to stay/eat/visitetc.

Most we talked to were friendly and helpful after you talked awhile - took them time to become concerned.

Some not the best.

Range of responses. Business people were generally informative and positive.

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

None.

Not really.

N.A.

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

***Did** not see any.*

None.

Some.

NQ.

B. Chamber office/visitor info center

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

*Went to visitor info - gal not very helpful **or** friendly - did not have a lot of information - gathered more from City Hall.*

***Info** center easy to locate - no chamber office.*

No, No.

People didn't know where to go.

*Several referred me to Antique Mall and their sign indicated 'Tourist **Info**' but I was disappointed in what I found.*

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

Very good. Good map. Excellent brochure!

Little information at info center - material distributed at City Hall could have been available here as well.

Very good, the best I saw anywhere.

*Sent me to ~~gas~~ station **or** city hall. Some were cool.*

Info at antique mall was disappointing. The slide show was out of sync and the person there did not offer me any assistance.

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

People talked to were not overly knowledgeable on this.

Not many to stay, but a lot to eat at.

N.A. Good.

4. How prepared/helpful were they.

The people we talked to were not real positive or sure of themselves. Had a hard time giving directions when asked.

Very little help.

Women in hardware and women in pharmacy very helpful, better than chamber.

5. Convenient hours?

OK.

Opened at 10:00 am. - suggest earlier time.

No.

I understand how difficult it is to run a chamber in a small community, but people should know where info is located and who is active in chamber. No one knew for sure who the current officers were.

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

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

a. City Hall - very good. b. Info Center - terrible, also antique store. c. Real Estate - good.

Generally good.

Shop people pretty good - the ones who would talk to you. People on street good info. Banks all pretty good.

Generally good.

a. Woman at East Main Ceramics was very nice and knew the area quite well. b. Woman at "Leader" office knew the community and was very helpful. c. Best visit was with Lyliss at Dobbs Duds - what a salesperson, very outgoing - she was only one to mention upcoming tour of historic homes.

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

a. Yes b. Not real knowledgeable c. Yes

Referred to chamber member and real estate agent.

Shop people - yes. Street people - yes. Bars - yes.

NO.

'Leader"office was very good at this.

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

a. Good b. Poor c. Good

a. Appearance **as** expected - similar to Cuba City. b. Not very talkative until drawn out.

Shop people good. Street people good. Bars, stations and city workers good

Neat, clean, not overdressed, cross section **as** expected.

a. No problems b. Some real extremes - Lyliss was very positive, many others were indifferent.

4. Other comments

a. The people we talked to at City Hall were probably the most helpful and optimistic. b. She was no help at all. c. The lady we talked with was kind of cold at first, and after awhile of **us** talking, she became more helpful.

Most people seem to take town for granted. No one really tried to sell the town to me. Women in pharmacy pretty good on the history.

No help to customers in Antique Mall. Mailman was friendly and informative. Old people were very friendly and supportive of the town.

Librarian was not overly helpful. I'm used to librarians who really know their community - the person I talked to was courteous but just not outgoing.

5. General

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

On a scale of 1 - 10, I would rate them at 6 to 7.

Most of them were pretty good.

N.A. ? YES.

People were good on directions - most had to think when I asked what "The Grove" was. Several didn't seem to know what I was talking about.

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

Fairy good - not much in clothing outlets. Did not see any motels.

Limited retail services as would be expected in a small community located close to larger metropolitan areas.

Few stores didn't wait on you or even speak Others were very friendly.

Adequate.

Not bad ~~for~~ a community of this size with larger cities nearby.

C. Are there public restrooms.

Yes

Available at park

Park good.

In the parks - otherwise??

Yes - at park, open and clean.

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

Did not see any phone booths.

Good.

The one I saw was pretty good.

Yes - not clean but worked.

Yes - in reasonably good condition.

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

No - had a hard time telling where it was.

Wasn't sure how much area was in park until looked at map - appeared inactive at present.

Just so-so.

Active - no. Attractive - O.K.

Looks just "OK. I got the feeling that it has been neglected a bit.

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

The only taste I could come up with would be a fresh taste. I enjoyed the town very much.

Fresh.

Cigars, exhaust fumes, and apple pie.

Nothing that struck me.

G. What does community SMELL like?

The smell was great. The many trees helped this.

Fresh.

Trees of fall.

No strong odors - nothing memorable.

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

Basically a quiet town with the normal car-truck traffic.

Very quiet, few cars.

Quiet.

Leaves and cars.

The quiet nature of the community - no loud noises - nothing unpleasant.

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

I felt the overall attitude excluding City Hall was cold.

"Home-town" atmosphere. Quiet, little activity.

Friendly.

Lack of identity. Many people who haven't got time to know each other.

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

The three people in City Hall were very fn'endly and helpful - very positive. The rest were not as upbeat.

People were generally very tentative when first approached, but through conversation became more open and helpful.

On the whole, they were very fn'endly, helpful.

The older were more fn'endly and more helpful than the young. No walkers or joggers during the day like in Cuba City.

Some were very fn'endly, others not. Clerk at Antique Mall didn't even know I existed.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

Overall, I think it is a very nice community and I would not mind living there.

A very good town with a base to build on.

*Looks to have people who can afford to invest. **May** hold potential movers and shakers.*

*State Farm, Evansville Pharmacy, First United Realty - like the signs painted on windows. Heads Up Hair Design - nice looking building. House at 34 N. **Madison** - nice job **making** garage match house. Coach House sign needs paint. Grange Building - like the signs, but the empty display windows weren't appealing. Baker Manufacturing - Exceptionally well maintained for obviously older buildings. Railroad area - outside storage, junky. Pizza 'Palace' - ain't. Grove Family Dental - nice work on building, very nice sign. Windows need washing in some buildings. Lots of off street parking. Back of Grange Building was very nice. Impressive facades throughout the business district. Union Bank - thanks for courteous info on location of Tyme machine and also like info in lobby on the mural. Just curious, but, did someone who was instrumental in the historic preservation and downtown revitalization move from the area (ordie) about 5 years ago?? I got the feeling that a lot of things were happening and then.....everything just stopped. Most changes seem a few years old and several are in need of touch up and attention. There seems to be a layer of dust covering many of your fine accomplishments.*

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SIX MONTHS FROM NOW

I will always remember the trees and the beautiful park

Park and historic buildings.

Trees, parks, nice big neat old houses, the Baker Plant seemed so old but so neat and clean.

Big houses. Beautiful park Trees. (Unimpressive schools - not bad, just not special.) Big car dealers. The 'Grange' - 120 jobs.

Magnificent homes surrounded by a wealth of mature trees.

6. Doing it Right!

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

Trees. Park Amount of new home construction. Entrance sign of golf course. The historical sections of town.

City Parks. Historic District. Pride in City - well kept homes, etc. Trees. Great deal of new housing - growth.

Trees. Old neat homes (pride) in homes. Park ~~Baker Plant~~ ~~old~~ but neat and clean. The general design of old homes and Main Street buildings. A town I could live in.

Grange. Baker Industries. Trees. Park Growth.

Magnificent older homes. Mature trees. Beautiful park Well maintained residential. Quality promo pieces i.e. map, info folder and historic tour.

B. Describe ONE idea that you will steal for use in your own business/community describe the steps you will take to implement it within the NEXT 72 HOURS!

Try to become more friendly and helpful to anyone, whether it be a visitor or a resident.

Map/brochure received from City Hall. Plans for map are already in the works.

Hand outs and maps. Chamber and City already putting something together.

Inspect the outside of schools for sloppiness, cleanliness and welcome sign.

Historical tour brochure • will share with communities that have considered something like this.