

# First Impressions of Green Lake, WI by Waupaca, WI June, 2003

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\*A revised and updated version of the *First Impressions* program developed by Andrew Lewis and James Schneider, 1991

# First Impressions Revisited: A Program for Community Assessment & Improvement Final Report

Community You Visited (City and State): Green Lake, WI

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Date of visit and time spent: 6/6/03; 3 hours

Weather on date of visit: cloudy, rainy

## 1. Prior to Your Visit

*How easy was it to get information on the community that you are visiting?*

- Very, mailed packet received in one day
- Phone call
- Yes, it was easy.

*Did it accurately reflect what you saw?*

- Yes, thought well done website to be from a much larger community than Green Lake actually is.
- Yes
- Yes

*Did the information arrive in a timely fashion?*

- Yes, 1 day.
- Yes

*Did you have difficulties obtaining information on the community through a web search?*

- No.
- Did not look.

*What was the quality of information obtained from regional/state agencies and organizations?*

- OK.
- Good, mainly literature about the area.

## **2. Past Perceptions**

*What was your perception of the community before this visit? What did you expect to see?*

*Please comment on your knowledge of this community:*

- Knew it was a tourist spot with fine homes available for rent at conference center, well-known golf courses and large resort, Heidel House.
- Had participated in convention at American Baptist Convention facility a few years ago. Did know that it was an older tourist area.
- I had always imagined this place to be very clean (and fancy). I've been to the Heidel House when I was younger so that's what I think of.
- I had no idea about Green Lake. I had only heard about it . It was better than what I heard.
- Small community next to lake property owners.

## **3. The “Five Minute” Impression**

*After taking a five-minute drive through the community, without stopping, the following reactions were noted:*

- Coming from west on 23, turned right at state green highway sign (small) pointing to “business district.” Found ourselves on narrow street with hidden service club signs in the trees. Weren't sure we were in main business district until we had driven past it. Area is quite charming. Homes are very well tended.
- Very clean and quiet. Small community and very tourist friendly.
- It's a very quiet community without hustle and bustle of a lot of traffic. This is very nice and relaxing.
- Small town with specialty stores. Has a small industrial park (does not seem to fit in this town). Not many activities to do unless related to lake or surrounding golf courses. Very clean and quaint. This is a community I could enjoy to visit or even be a part of.

## **4. Community Entrances**

*The following observations were noted when entering the community from major entrances:*

*Approached from Hwy. 23 on west side.*

- No real welcome signs, feeling of “is this it?” If it hadn't been for almost hidden service club signs, we might have thought we'd made a wrong turn. Aesthetics-very wooded and rural. Safety/traffic issues-have to watch out for pedestrians, etc., in road though we saw no people whatsoever.

*Approached from 73/23/A East.*

- Welcome sign, directional signs-dark green with small white letters, difficult to find by car.

*Approached from A to South Street:*

- Welcome sign, industrial park, county
- Business district, direction signs to Green Lake small. Signs pointing to destinations seemed a bit too wordy for the size.
- Business park is near this entrance and area is more developed. Street is wide and well paved. Service club signs are here too, obscured by trees a bit, but easier to see than first approach.
- There wasn't very good signage for this community. When arriving to the city some signs were covered by the branches or other obscurities.
- Business park, cool street lights, signs small.

*Approached from Hwy. 23 to Lawson Dr.*

- Trim tree branches on signs.
- Clean, it was clean!
- Cute, organization signs, lake, looks old (in a good way).

## **5. Downtown Business Area**

*Observations about the general appearance of the downtown area:*

- Very charming. Only one main street, so things were easy to find.
- Very clean and small, but informative. Good idea for houses and cottages for sale in window.

*General Appearance of buildings, displays, signage:*

- Fair, older city, displays pretty good, signage good.
- The park area was very clean, did not spot any trash. There was a piece of chewed up gum on top of the monkey bars. Other than that, well put together.
- Buildings had signs of year built and what it was originally. Vacant buildings (3). Many real estate offices (5), antique store. Chamber Office had a sign with coming events. Racks for brochures.

*The variety of shopping:*

- This community is quite small and caters to tourists, so there were several specialty shops in addition to the basics (groceries, gasoline, etc.). The surprise – no fast food outlets. Is this planned?
- This is definitely a tourist area, few shops, beautiful old courthouse, Dartford Historical Society, opera house, Dartford Village, also city offices in same buildings. No surprises.
- There are a lot of realtors. Chamber very informative. Not too many stores, a few cafes.
- For the most part it is a small community. It seemed to have more small shops than larger retail shops.
- Small town very similar to King, without WI Veteran's Home. Did have a performing theatre. Everything seemed to be geared towards tourists. Did have a small grocery store and sporting goods store (specializing in fishing).

*How would you rate the variety and quality of the merchandise?*

- Good for this city.
- Well put together for the kinds of customers that will be there.

- Good, the merchandise was mainly food that I saw.
- More like crafts and antiques.

*What kind of customer service did you receive when you entered the retail businesses?*

- Greeted wherever I went. Very friendly service and helpful.
- Most shops open a little later, like 10:00, but when they did open they were very nice and helpful and answered questions very well. Nice people.
- Greeted wherever I went. Asked if they could help me. Hours opened at 10:00 am.

*Were there any governmental or nonprofit organizational activities that might serve as a magnet for the shopping district?*

- County Courthouse and county health services in another building.
- Opera House, Historical Society, very informative.
- I did not see anything.
- Museum, opera houses, city hall, courthouse , park.

*Were there the following public amenities?*

*Pay phones (working with phonebook intact!):*

- Yes.
- Yes.

*Drinking fountains:*

- Yes.

*Benches:*

- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.

*Public restrooms:*

- Located in lakeside park next to boat launch. A bit hard to find because only street side sign was for Lions club, but very clean.
- Located in park, boat landing, clean.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.

*Appealing landscaping:*

- Very clean and neat city.
- The appealing landscape of Green Lake was its main feature, because of it water full and grounds surrounding the “bay” very nice.
- Yes.

*Did you have any difficulty finding parking? Could you access multiple services from where you parked?*

- No trouble finding parking, in fact, no traffic.
- There was street parking and a parking lot by the pier. Public bathrooms very clean – good!
- Parking not a problem we walked 5-7 block from south the city north.
- Plenty of parking, steps up on one side.

## **6. Other Retail Shopping Areas (Big Box Retailers/Shopping Malls)**

*What types of businesses did you notice that would fit the general category of “Big Box Retailer”?:*

- None.
- We found Nordic Village lots of little shops. Very clean and neat. Was getting ready to open.
- Only one big grocery store (Grocery Bag) but no big stores.
- None, there was a “big box” gas station called BP, small “ma and pa” type shops.
- None.

*General Appearance of buildings, displays signage:*

- Very clean and neat.
- Neat displays for renting cottages at a local real estate agency. But there was no eye catching displays or signage that caught my eye.
- The welcome signs were not very visible, and the green directory signs were little. Otherwise very clean.
- Chamber sign was informational. Opera house with coming events.

*The variety of shopping:*

- Specialty shops.
- They had a lot of real estate agencies. I did not see a clothing store, but I did see a lot of shops for food.
- There were not many stores that I saw. A few cute cafes, an insurance place.
- Yes, greater amount of real estate offices.

*How would you rate the variety and quality of the merchandise?*

- For tourists.
- They had a lot of real estate agencies. I did not see a clothing store, but I did see a lot of shops for food.
- Good.
- Antique store across from grocery store packed with materials. Many flow through rooms.

*What kind of customer service did you receive when you entered the retail businesses?*

- Yes, they were very helpful and know what they were talking about and very knowledgeable about what questions we had.
- Opened at 10 am.
- Yes, usually some shops opened a little later 10, but for the most part they were open during normal shopping times.
- They were very nice and polite. They followed the 15 second rule with greeting customers, they asked about me and made conversation. Very welcoming.

- Very warm welcome. Helpful but not pushy. I am used to having stores open at 8-9 am. Most of stores opened at 10 am.

*Did you have any difficulty finding parking?*

- No.
- No.
- There was street parking and a parking lot by the pier. Public bathrooms very clean. Good!
- Parking was not difficult in the city, plenty of parking.
- We parked in a parking lot and walked down the main street. Not bad.
- Plenty of parking, save steps up on one side of building.

*Could you access multiple services from where you parked?*

## **7. Industrial Parks/Commercial Areas**

*Is there a defined area where manufacturing industries could easily locate/expand?*

- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Probably.
- Yes, had a park.

*What did you find attractive about the potential locations for manufacturing/commercial businesses?*

- Like the rest of this community, the business park and businesses in it are attractive and well maintained. There seemed to be several spots available in the park for small to medium-sized firms.
- Seemed to be planned for smaller businesses. Quite clean and neat.
- That it was outside the city.
- Yes, had a park.

*How would you evaluate the general health of manufacturing businesses that are currently located in the community?*

- They seemed to be doing well.
- Good, probably enough for tourist area.
- Very well put together. Did not see any buildings for rent/sale.
- They looked good, I did not investigate it all that well.
- Clean; easy in, easy out, green space. Newer buildings. Small businesses, manufacturing does not seem to be that strong in Green Lake.

*Could you find print information and information and informed persons that could provide you with data that would help you make an informed business location decision?*

- Yes.
- Yes.
- Chamber was helpful.
- No.

- Chamber was helpful to a degree.

## 8. Health Care Services

*Comment on the availability and apparent quality of hospitals and emergency medical services:*

- None in town? But services available in neighboring communities.
- Only a medical center, hospitals available in nearby Ripon and Berlin.
- I did not see any health care facilities for this area.
- Don't remember seeing any of these.

*Comment on the availability and condition of facilities for physician, dental, optometrist, and other medical care:*

- Did not see any.
- Did not notice too many, again available in nearby towns.

*What long-term care, assisted living, or nursing home facilities exist in the community?*

- Did see Green Lake Senior Citizen place.
- Did not see any.
- Didn't see any.

## 9. Housing

*How would you evaluate the existing mix of housing stock?*

- Homes in this community range from small ranch-style and older Victorians to grand lakeside estates. Most vacant lots seem to be outside the village but some "for sale" signs could be found.
- Lots of beautiful old homes. Well kept up. There were also areas of new homes and developments. Very nice homes. There were some "for sale" and "for rent" signs.
- The houses were all very nicely presented. I did not see any in poor shape.
- There is a very nice mix of old, brand new and historic looking houses and it seemed that the land was well developed.
- Green Lake is mainly older homes as well as lake property. There is a small amount of new construction.

*Were there any indications that the housing market was depressed?*

- There were a few houses for sale, but not too much. However, all lawn and landscaping were well maintained, nice and neat.
- I only saw a couple of "for sale" signs. No signs that it was a bad place to live.
- No. Most everything looked well kept, see above.
- Upkeep was fantastic! We drove around looking for more derelict neighborhoods and found none. With a very few exceptions, all houses (and yards) were in excellent repair, or were undergoing repainting and renovation.
- Plenty of for sale signs. Judging at the prices, I would say the housing market was not depressed.

*Were there any signs that it would be difficult to find acceptable housing?*

- All offices had pictures, books, etc.

*Does the local housing market have housing that would appeal to all income ranges? Are there sufficient rental properties for persons interested in building or simply living in the community prior to buying housing?*

- The houses seemed quite expensive. However, they were nice houses. I like the idea to put the houses “for sale” on the windows of realtors.
- Not sure! However, the cottages that were for rent looked good and very affordable. As to look for a house to purchase, I did not ask.

## **10. Schools**

*Do the schools appear to be adequate in size or do you see the use of “temporary class rooms”? Are they well maintained? Please comment on the following:*

*Pre-School/Kindergarten/Head Start/Day Care facilities:*

*Elementary School:*

- Community Day Care.

*Middle School/Junior High:*

- We did see a middle school and it looked well maintained, well guarded with gates and fences to protect it from the busy road that surrounds it.
- A very nice looking facility for about 400 children, 15 to a class is the average.

*High School:*

- Nice, small, seems to fit community.

*Higher Education (Community College, Technical College, University):*

- There are two University of Wisconsin campuses and 3 other colleges within 30 miles.
- None.

*Were you able to find print information in the community that helped assess the quality of the educational system?*

- Yes.
- No.
- No.

## **11. Faith/Religion**

*Comment on the number of denominations represented in the community:*

- Noticed Catholic, Lutheran and Baptist churches.
- I thought the variety was normal for a small community.
- 2; Catholic and Lutheran.

- Catholic, Lutheran.

*Comment on the physical appearance of the churches in the community:*

- Did not see them.
- They looked well kept and appealing in the tourists eye!
- All were good.
- Very nice looking from outside.

*Are there any signs of church-sponsored community services?*

- There was the Peace Lutheran school.
- Not that I saw.
- No, hard to find.
- Yes.

*Are there any facilities or statements that some would view as intrusive or that would make someone feel uncomfortable if they were not of a particular faith?*

- Not really when we asked about religion they were very helpful to all religions that we asked about.
- No there were not.
- No.
- No. Baptist convention center is a gem of a facility. Some people might be uncomfortable with rules concerning alcoholic beverages there, but only if they wanted to use the center.
- Not that I could see.

## 12. Civic

*Does it appear as though there are a variety of nonprofit organizations and clubs within the community?*

- Several service club signs at entrances to community.
- Did see American Legion and VFW.
- No.
- A few signs when we came in and also downtown.

## 13. Residents

*In what ways did you find (or not find) people helpful?*

- Very helpful at the Chamber of Commerce. The guy was very helpful and lived there all his life.
- Everyone seemed to have a smile on their face. It felt very welcoming.
- Residents seemed busy, not real receptive to outsiders.

*How did people talk about their community? What were their attitudes about their schools, public leaders, and community services?*

- Good.
- Proud of community. Would like to see it stay the same.

*Were community members knowledgeable about their community or able to refer you to people who were?*

- Yes, as far as community knowledge goes.
- Very much so.
- Pretty easy to be knowledgeable about a small town.

*Did residents reflect the diversity that is represented in the rest of the country? Are there some segments of the population that would not feel comfortable in this community?*

- There is not much variation in skin color or ethnicity visible here.
- I would say people are in the upper middle class by the lake. Lower middle class in town.

## **14. Public Infrastructure**

*Streets, street signing and lighting:*

- Charming-though given signs within city (hanging) were very hard to read without stopping car right next to them, small white lettering on green background.
- Streets good condition; lighting attractive; signing okay.
- The welcome signs were mildly blocked by brush.
- Normal street signs, a lack of signage on finding things.
- Street signage could have been larger and more visible.

*Land Use Planning:*

- Not sure.
- I think it was laid out nicely.
- There are older districts, and new developments. Lots of dead end streets, typical of lake area.
- Seemed to have residential, commercial and manufacturing all in different areas. They either planned this or it came about naturally.

*Sidewalks:*

- Yes, good condition.
- I was nervous when there was a big drop from sidewalk to street.
- Yes, a nice path from one side of the city to the other.
- Very friendly.

*Public Restrooms:*

- Good, easy to use, well marked to find.
- Very clean, which is rare to see.
- Clean.
- Clean, hard to find from street.
- By parks, 2 that I saw. Clean.

*City/Village/Town Hall:*

- City offices located in old village hall, looked to be kept up very good.
- Cute! I thought it was very appealing.
- Easy to find, located downtown.

- Neat older building with green space in front.

*Police/Fire Protection/Emergency Medical Services Facilities:*

- I did not see any of these facilities.
- Did not see.
- Yes.
- Older buildings, lower level. Right in the downtown area.

*Public Parking:*

- Lots of it available on street and large lot at boat launch.
- Fairly good.
- Available and user friendly.
- Good, very adequate.
- Plenty, very clean.

*Library:*

- Did not see one.
- Yes.
- Looked larger than I would have expected.

*Landscaping/street trees:*

- Many, many trees, everything well cared for.
- Beautiful streets, lots of trees, clean and neat looking.
- Could use a trim.
- Very good, well kept landscaping is their centerpiece.
- Small town feeling. Very nice.

*Pay phones, drinking fountains, benches, other misc.:*

- These items were existent and well kept.
- Did not see pay phones or fountains, but benches were nice.
- Benches and picnic tables in park by boat landing.
- In parks, 1 that I saw.

## **15. Recreation/Tourism**

*Is the community well known for any particular attraction or event? Do they have a community slogan that capitalizes on that asset?*

- Well known for Green Lake, no signs. Slogan mentioned on golf course billboard.
- Green Lake Country
- I'm not sure, but they have a lot of music entertainment and art related activities. They have that convention center – very impressive!
- No, not to my knowledge.
- Yes, lake, golf.

*Comment on the availability and selection of overnight accommodations:*

- Good, a lot of nice bed and breakfasts and one motel that did not look very busy.
- I saw quite a few; they were more upscale, but fit right in.
- Good!
- More than I would have expected.

*Did you see any indication of significant events taking place in the community that would be of interest to both visitors and residents?*

- No.
- Yes.
- Music events and sailing.
- Yes, I did not see it but I was told about a music fest that was put on in the park.
- Not really.

*Are there any significant natural features that have the potential of drawing people to the community?*

- Yes a very nice water fall in the downtown park, the lake is a very big part of the city.
- Green Lake, biggest lake in WI.
- Green Lake.
- Green Lake.
- Green Lake.

*Are there any significant man-made attractions?*

- Boat launch, small lakeside park with band shell.
- Green Lake Conference Center.
- The historical building had a lot of info.
- Yes, a very good historical center that is helpful and full of information about their city.
- Not that I saw in.

*Is there an obvious visitor's center, chamber of commerce office, Main Street office, or other facility that serves the needs of visitors? Please comment on the staff, facilities, signage, visibility, etc.*

- Yes, very nice – people and information.
- Yes, we went and were very friendly.
- Yes, easy to find on the main street. “Green Country”
- Chamber
- Yes, right on Main St. Very easy to find.

*Are there any restaurants, specialty shops or attractions that would bring you back to this community in the near future?*

- No, though many come to stay on the lake, or visit the Heidel House or Baptist Center.
- No fast food places.
- I would love to go again because of everything I saw.
- Yes, the small quaint shops with ice cream.
- Menus were interesting buildings of restaurants were unique. If I was stopping in area I would frequent them.

## 16. Using your Senses

*What did the community taste like? Was there any specialty food item, bakery, restaurant, or candy store that you will remember?*

- The ice cream shop. There was a sub shop. I did not eat there however, it looked good.
- There was an ice cream and chocolate shop- smelled nice!
- No.
- Ice cream shop by city hall.

*What did the community smell like?*

- It smelled faintly of lake – a great summertime, vacation-y smell – and fresh air.
- Smells of outdoors by a lake – clean.
- I didn't smell anything bad – by the pier was somewhat “fishy” but other than that it was clean.
- There were no bad smells. However, there was a nice flower garden in the park that smelled very good.
- Very clean smell.

*What sounds did you hear?*

- Very minimal noise, not very much traffic which was good! There were residents talking as they walked by each other.
- No traffic! Very natural.
- Birds in park.
- Very quiet and restful.
- Soft sounds. Those of tourist community. Small boating.

*Did you have any experiences that impacted the way the community feels?*

- Not really – it was not crowded, a lot of room
- It was rainy, but it was still a nice visit!
- It felt good.
- No.

## 16. Wrap-up

*What are the 5 most positive things that you observed about the community?*

- 1) Several team members said they would like to live here. 2) Green Lake is a beautiful community. 3) Green Lake takes me back to an older, more gracious, leisurely time. 4) No fast food! 5) People who live in Green Lake obviously take great pride in their community.
- 1) The community seems to be growing, some industry, quite a few new homes, a clean city. 2) I'm sure it will continue to be a nice tourist area. 3) A beautiful area to visit within our state.
- 1) Very clean. 2) Quiet. 3) Friendly. 4) Attractive. 5) Historic.
- 1) The nice waterfall in the downtown. 2) Helpfulness of the people of the Chamber of Commerce. 3) No garbage in the water, very clean. 4) The American Baptist Assembly and the architecture.
- 1) Very clean. 2) Very homey. 3) Public restrooms. 4) Parks. 5) Lake.

*What are the five biggest obstacles/challenges facing this community?*

- 1) More tourism for the community. 2) Better signs. 3) Businesses open a little earlier. 4) Something that would attract you to the water. 5). A better beach area.
- 1) Size (but good!) 2) Directions.
- 1) Attracting businesses that will not detract from what the area offers, while offering jobs to residents and, especially, young people. 2) Providing visitors reasons to come into town. 3) Keeping housing costs affordable for those living here year-round.
- 1) Attracting tourists to downtown. 2) Increasing industrial park. 3) Getting rid of the mentality, “this is just a tourist town.”

*What will you remember most about this community six months from now (positive or negative)?*

- The American Baptist Assembly and its architecture. There are no negatives of the community.
- How pleasant it is.
- A nice area.
- How incredibly clean it was there. I’ve never been to a community without a bit of trash!
- The lake.

*Describe ONE idea that you will borrow for use in your own business/community and describe how you will start to implement it within the next 72 hours!*

- I like how they have garbage cans with lids!
- Nothing.

***You might want to consider tracking purchases (perhaps even finding a sponsor to provide \$50 to each participant). It would be useful to report where any money was spent within the community.***

***Insert pictures where appropriate in the sections above or paste your photos into the final report at the end using the following format:***

***Picture #\_\_\_\_\_***

***This Picture was taken because:***

***Please don’t forget to send a copy of your final report to:  
[ablewis@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:ablewis@facstaff.wisc.edu) (an electronic version would be appreciated!)***

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