

**First**  
**IMPRESSIONS**  
of

**Jefferson, Wisconsin**  
**October 12, 1993**

**A program for community improvement**

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**Sponsored by University of Wisconsin-Extension, Jefferson County**

**in cooperation with**  
**University of Wisconsin-Extension, Rock County**  
**and**  
**Milton, Wisconsin**

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## **FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

Each and every day, year after year, people travel to Jefferson for the first time. These first time visitors come for different reasons—business, pleasure, traffic detours, etc. Each develops a "first impression" of the community, based on what they experience. **This** impression, be it good or bad or neutral, is what the visitors take home. These perceptions, accurate or not, then define Jefferson in the mind of the visitor. Learning about these impressions can help a community become more aware of its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for community improvement.

*First Impressions* is a community exchange program designed to help a community see itself through the eyes of "visitors". These visitors are outsiders who purposefully travel to a community to perform a structured community analysis Over a period of several hours. Two communities participate in the exchange, each visiting the other and then preparing a report on positive or negative reactions--a first impression.

A team of five volunteers ~~from~~ the City of Milton, Wisconsin, (**Rock County**) made a *First Impressions* visit to Jefferson, Wisconsin on Tuesday, October 12, 1993. One man and four women of various ages comprised the visitation team. What follows are the impressions they recorded during their visit to Jefferson.

The data contained in this report were requested by the Jefferson Development Corporation and the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce, whose members are trying to determine how local citizens would like Jefferson steered into the future. This group will be responsible for interpreting the data in regard to community improvement issues and sharing it with the City Council, Mayor, School Board and other organizations.

Joseph E. Moskal, Community Development Agent  
University of Wisconsin-Extension, **Rock County**

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

- An older community with much industry.
- Since Jefferson is bigger, I didn't feel it would be as "quaint" as Milton. But I expect that the people will try to be helpful. Other than that I have no expectations.
- The only impression was the bottleneck that leads to the I-90 on 26 N.
- I know that Jefferson is the county seat; also that it was settled by people from Germany, so I imagine that the city will reflect that heritage.
- I have passed through Jefferson a number of times. Some areas, especially at north end, look worn-out, in need of repair. I have always admired the waterworks building and the white lights on the trees downtown @ all times of the year. Jefferson appears much smaller than it actually is.

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

**Positive:**

- Hwy. 26 South: Very attractive & unique water tower. Nice welcome sign. Well kept motel. Very unusual and interesting water works building. Hwy. 26 N: Exceptionally well maintained mobile home park. Hwy. 18 W: No comment. Hwy. 18 E: Very interesting with Catholic Church & St. Collettas. Very well kept and appealing.
- You knew you were in Jefferson—there were many signs. Coming in from 18, nothing catches the eyes.
- Lovely entrance. Well kept businesses. South: Trailer Court well kept. A plus is the wonderful old buildings when kept up.
- From south, immediately saw sign to southside industrial park. Collins Road area well maintained by southside industrial park and apartments and homes.
- Hwy. 26 S: Very nice community signs--clear and visible. Waterworks building unusual and well maintained. Hwy. 26 N: Trailer court nice and neat with mature trees. People seem to settle down there, usually trailer courts make you think transiency. Trailer court here is great part area. Very well maintained. Hwy. 18 E: St. Lawrence Church and area around lovely. Nice walls.

**Negatives:**

- Hwy. 26 S: Old auto bodyshop in disrepair. Unkept warehouse type building. Hwy. 26 N: Unappealing pile of debris in front of ready-mix plant. Hwy. 18 W: Used implement dealers yard could use some upkeep. Hwy. 18 E: None.
- Coming in from 26 from south hardware/lumber store seems to detract.

- People's Meat Market should be encouraged to clean up the front of the building (awning all torn--ripped) ruins the look of that block.
- Residential seems very close to industrial park. A few abandoned buildings approaching from Hwy. 26 S., before reaching the community welcoming sign. A sprawling look to the outskirts--seems to be happening everywhere.
- Strong odor from Friskie's factory upon entering city. Hans Bros. needs a tall concrete fence to camouflage the view, West entrance farm implement dealer needs to be tidied up. A fence surrounding old equipment. Bridge needs new paint. People's Meat Market needs new awning.

### 3. *As you drive around town your comments on:*

#### A. **Appearance**

##### 1. **Downtown**

- Nice trees, interesting architecture.
- On 26/18 intersection meat market unappealing. Garbage can starting to overflow. Some areas nice; others as first mentioned need to be fixed.
- Empty except for traffic. No one in stores between 10 to 12 noon.
- Puffins looks attractive. Bon-Ton bakery has a nice sign. Carolyn's Cafe on corner (mid-morning snack)-friendly waitress who said she was active in Council for Performing Arts. Meat market run down looking exterior. Jefferson Restaurant and Lounge windows dirty, window sills need paint.
- Relatively clean sidewalks in need of repair. Store fronts need to be kept neat and tidy (example- People's Meat Market). How about adding overhead direction signs for lane markers. 26 & 18 is very congested. Some great architecture.

##### 2. **Residential**

- Very well kept homes, hardly any found in disrepair. People seem to take real pride in their homes,
- Very nice, condos kept up very nice. Person working on street said "hello, how are you?" nice. Nice trailer court.
- Well kept homes, lawns looked after.
- Northside: Maple Grove mobile home park kept up very well. Gardens and lawns are colorful and depend on naturalness for their beauty. Did not see junk around or lawn ornaments either, which can be really distracting to the overall good appearance of the neighborhoods. Well-maintained homes.
- Neat and clean. People take pride in their homes and yards. Some beautiful architecture.

### 3. Industrial park

- Well kept attractive could use a sign to identify it as the industrial park.
- Many industries set far apart—so doesn't trash town. I like it--nothing great.
- Excellent. Well developed. Very clean looking on the south side.
- Downtown industries look neat and clean. Same with southside.
- Needs more signage. Larger, more visible sign alerting you to industrial park. Once you are there, need a sign proclaiming it is indeed the industrial park.

### 4. Parks

- Very well maintained and inviting.
- First park—Riverfront Park: nice setting and layout. Could clean up a little bit. Some garbage here and there; paint the picnic area.
- Lovely. Paint benches. This is a plus with river. Much more could be done to paint this out.
- Riverfront Park: Nice setting by river. Picnic tables could use sprucing up. Nice city park near golf course.
- Clean, neat, lovely landscaping. Very nice.

### 5. Schools

- Sure are a lot of schools in town. All seem to be in excellent repair. Community seems quite committed to education.
- Very nice. JMS—old. Enough classrooms, no facilities for handicapped. High school very nice. People very nice; not a single complaint, but they have a lot of free space. I like having a TV in library with all news.
- Excellent. Very friendly. Lakeside Lutheran pulls down high school enrollment. 600 students. Sullivan Rome Helenville.
- High school very airy, spacious atmosphere. Friendly libraries, principal, teachers. Community school auditorium wonderful. Should be used more for all-school convocations for instance.
- Schools seem to be well placed throughout and nice looking.

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

- Streets generally in good repair. Some sidewalks downtown need to be replaced. Some quite hazardous.
- Garbage can on sidewalks overflowing. Nice though.
- Good.
- Sidewalks downtown, especially east on 18, are in need of repair. Gutter needs cleaning. Some had foliage growing in them. Lights are fine and better directional signage at hwys. 12 and 26.

7. other

- Library: cozy reading areas--great wingback chairs! Great atmosphere. Separate children's library a plus.

B. Signing

1. community entrance/exit signs

- Very well marked.
- Nice, I like their welcome sign and the setting it's placed in. Other entrances just population sign, no welcome.
- Attractive sign at south entrance to city.
- Good visibility.

2. Streets

- Good,
- Could tell where important places are, schools, etc. but otherwise seem well kept up. A few like all communities could be paved better. Big roads 26/18 well maintained.
  - In good repair. Lots of traffic going through downtown, but very few people shopping in the stores.
  - Seems to be well set up. Map easy to read. Please encourage city to put aerial signs to designate lanes at hwys. 26 and 18.

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

- Adequate.
- Park signs information; no hospital near. Okay, not the best.
- No hospital N/A. No signs for directing to parks.

#### 4. Storefront signs

- Generally good. Some need repair and some need to be more visible.
- Some kind of "trashy" but you know where/what most places are. Some places I was confused on what they were; awnings falling down.
- Hard to read. Mostly faded.
- Land office building in old church building is very attractive with plantings and window boxes and old clock at curbside.
- Some need repair. Please encourage People's Meat Market to clean it up.

#### 5. Industrial park

- No sign identifying park.
- Nice, the signs are obvious in a nice setting; at least the ones out of town but you figure out it's an industrial park.
- Small sign.
- North side industrial park very close to residential.
- Small sign marks turn off. Need larger sign on 26 to inform there is one first. No sign designating you are at the industrial park. It would help to designate lots available.

#### 6. City Hall, police, etc.

- Excellent.
- Nice. Didn't visit police.
- City Hall non-smoking in its entirety. Wonderful!
- Well marked. Nice building.

#### 7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

- Nice, not too dumpy or too thin. They are informative of what's in Jefferson.
- Some seem dated. Others are fine.

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

##### A. City/Village Hall

##### 1. Is there a street map?

- Yes.
- Yes, 3 kinds of street maps. It also shows important places on the maps.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes, very well done.

2. Community brochure/directory
  - Yes.
  - A lot. Everything from brush pickup to 911 and emergency system. Had stuff that goes on in the community.
  - Chamber has a folder of information that seems to cover all areas.
  - Yes.
  - Again, very well done.
  
3. Community profile (including business and industrial opportunities).
  - Yes.
  - They could answer questions and there were brochures; but not a lot on industry and business.
  - City Hall has a notebook that is readily available to visitor. It included wages, businesses, etc.
  - Yes.
  - Could emphasize it more.
  
4. Recommendations on place to stay/eat/visit.....etc.
  - Very helpful.
  - Gave good places to eat and visit. Didn't ask for places to stay.
  - Two restaurants seemed to be their choice. Fiedlers was a Hardee's with a new name.
  - Yes.
  - Local people good about recommending restaurants.
  
5. Contact people & addresses listed if I want more info.
  - Yes, they sent us to Chamber of Commerce for more information.
  - Yes.
  - Okay.
  
6. Complimentary Items (Postcards, bookmarks, coupons, etc.)
  - No.
  - Nope, just brochures.
  - No.
  - Several handouts noted.

## B. Chamber office/visitor info center

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

- Right next to all the other important places.
  - Not too well marked, although people were knowledgeable and pointed it out.
- Yes, woman in shoe store directed us.
- No referrals made. Saw the signs for information.

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

- Very helpful.
- Yes, it had a bunch of brochures and information including real estate and maps. It was helpful.
- Excellent.
- Extensive.
- Well done.

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

- Very helpful.
- It gave a few on places to eat and visit. Had brochures on places to eat/stay/visit. Very helpful here; people referred mainly two places to eat.
- Fiedler's and Fairview Inn.
- Recommended Fairview Inn or Puffins for lunch. One person in a store recommended Fiedlers. Ate there-- good burger but the atmosphere was smokey.
- People had strong preferences on recommendation.

### 4. How prepared/helpful were they.

- Very.
- They were very helpful and answered all the questions to the best of their ability.
- Excellent food.
- Asked for help locating Glacial-Drumlin Bicycle Trail. Chamber person showed me the route on the area map.
- Okay.

### 5. Convenient hours?

- Forgot to check the hours. They were open when we needed them!
- Yes. They have more area..3 offices are into one room, probably could be better if more spaced out.
- Yes.
- Yes.

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

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

- Seemed to know directions quite well.
- One lady and school officials knew alot where things were and recommended a good restaurant.
- Advertiser had a wealth of knowledge on festival.
- Hardware sales people knowledgeable.
  
- No one knows what "gemuitlekiet" means.
- One lady/waitress lived here 3 months; knew basics like library/city hall.
- Schools (h.s.) 600 students. Many private schools in the area; this must be a plus to people who want private schools!
- People at drugstore slow to help.
  
- The people knew information very well overall; asked questions of a shop owner; gave industrial history of Jefferson.
- Librarian had to finish personal conversation before could assist us.

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

- No need.
- Yes, people referred us to places.
- Schools went out of their way to give us information.
- Hardware store helped out and locals too.
  
- People kept referring us to the Chamber of Commerce to help.
- People at information bureau helped out.
  
- Overall everybody had references.
- At antique shop (lady gone) ignored us.

3. Attitude. appearance, etc.

- Most all people we came in contact with were very friendly and helpful.
- Carolyn's Cafe--nice appearance/atmosphere, very homey, although joking of employees inappropriate.
- Town is nice but could use some fresh paint (especially old hotel)
  
- The town is very clean in most places.
- Like the small white lights downtown at night.

- The whole town had a good appearance.
- Most folks helpful.

#### 4. Other comments

- The trees that line the street are nice, especially with the colors.
- Jefferson seems to be a mix of public and private schools. Yet, the public school seems well funded.
- Need more approach by sales staffs.
- The community has nothing spectacular to see besides Germanfest--why come here.
- High school is state of the art.
- Inform people what "gimeritlicht" means.
- The auditorium and art center shows how well community and school can work together.
- Nice cozy library.

#### 5. General

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

- Yes.
- Yes, they know who founded their buildings, fires and happenings in history, they didn't know the meaning of "gheimkite" or whatever their town festival is in September.
- Directions yes, history/events no.
- No one seems to know what "getmichle..t" means; but they do know about the parade and play. No one I met talked much about the German heritage and I was surprised there isn't at least one German restaurant.
- Some are rather vague.

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

- Unfortunately, no one seemed to be doing much retail business in town. Perhaps some more useful business would be in order. Parallel parking somewhat difficult on hwy. 26.
- Nice big supermarket for town--out of town a little. Hotel okay. Nice library (helpful) local news/information.
- Two bed and breakfast. Inn. Hotel.
- No lodging other than Hilltop Motel.

**C. Are there public restrooms?**

- In parks.
- Yes, in restaurants and public places.
- No.
- Didn't note any.

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

- No phone book in phone booth we visited.
- One payphone with kiosk and door in park - nice
- Two busy corner intersection (no booth) - door hard to carry on conversation,
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Payphone at 26/18 needs a door and working lights.

**E. Industrial park...does it look old & attractive.**

- only one business in north park looks new. South park very nice.
- It's not attractive, but its se art so it's not to bad north - the one in south better.
- Yes.
- Hard to identify.

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

- Very good food.
- Average restaurants.
- Nothing noted in particular.

**G. What does community SMELL like?**

- Cat food.
- Later in the afternoon I could smell Friskees Company, otherwise not even the river had particular smell..
- Summer-cat food at Friskies plant NO smell today.
- Friskees has an odor.

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

- Traffic, in industrial area, quiet peaceful in residential. The siren at 12:00 am
- Heavy continuous traffic on D Street. Must discourage shoppers from shopping
- Lots of traffic.

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

- Very friendly.
- In most places it's lively, especially with the trees. Even with the "dumplier" places - aren't bad. Not very nice, but doesn't give you a "yuck" feeling.
- Very friendly and warm.
- Warm, quiet.
- Cool, rather deserted. No clothing or sports shops to make you stay home. Nice Piggly Wiggly.

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

- Without exception - very friendly and helpful!
- The whole town was nice - its almost as if somebody was paying them to be nice. They all were helpful. Though at the high school, the principal seemed reluctant until he knew what we were doing.
- People in public eye very friendly and helpful. Difficult to meet others as no one seemed to be shopping.
- Waitress at cafe was friendly.
- Waitress at Fiedler's had a lot of information about people's workplaces.
- City Hall, Chamber of Commerce & Council for Arts workers all friendly and helpful.
- Mostly helpful. Not out-going.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:**

- The trees along the terraces downtown give a warmth to the area. The trees set off the interesting architecture.
- Jefferson's downtown has few businesses. Hwy 26 traffic would make it difficult for travelers to stop and visit Jefferson.
- The churches and schools private and public - as clean as the rest of the town.
- Jefferson is very lucky to have the Rock River running through it. It adds so much interest to the community and is very pretty.

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**C**

- Beautiful buildings, interesting architecture, friendly people and inviting parks.
- I will remember two schools -especially the high school auditorium.
- High school auditorium, Hwy 26 traffic, Lovely old buildings, friendly people.
- Quiet atmosphere, nice schools, friendly people.
- Jefferson looks a little frayed around the edges.

6. *Doing it Right!*

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

1. Attractive restaurants  
Community Schools cooperation on auditorium  
Community Schools working together for the auditorium  
The helpfulness of people & their friendliness  
Beautiful well kept public buildings.
2. Nice signs  
Attractive and convenient complex of buildings of varying styles - City hall, Carnegie Bldg., Library, etc.  
Architecture of old buildings make this an interesting town.  
How the homes and yards were so well kept up.  
Attractive residential areas.
3. Nice Tree lights  
Non-smoking policy at City Hall  
New town houses make you feel the town is growing.  
If need be, they have a little of everything-shoes, clothes, hardware, food.  
Nice Library
4. Attractive buildings (Land Office & Water Works are neat!)  
Cared for homes and garden, and interesting old architectural styles.  
All areas seem well kept.  
They have great schools.  
Excellent schools.
5. Old depot looked interesting.  
The two rivers provide a peaceful atmosphere for the town.  
Town library excellent - well laid out with a children's room downstairs.  
They have nice parks and sidewalks for strolls and leisure activities.  
Inviting parks and recreation areas.
6. Liked brick streets near train station.

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!

- Check out map to see if its as nice. Its in the works with the printers now.
- Community school cooperation on a project.
- A good project would be to cooperate in planning and providing walkways to the schools through all parts of the city - follow this through School Board and City

Council.

- School library has current events on their computer. I will call our high school to see if this is possible for our students.
- The t.v. news area for students to watch CNN - mention to Mrs. Boglasheki (librarian).

# First Impressions Color Slide Photo Images

Pictures of: Jefferson, Wisconsin

Taken by: Milton *First Impressions* Visitation Team

Date: October 12, 1993

Picture Number	Description of Picture	General Impression (✓)	
		Positive (✓)	Negative (✓)
1	Auto body shop south Hwy. 26		✓
2	Warehouse south Hwy. 26		✓
3	Sign south Hwy. 26	✓	
4	Water works building	✓	
5	Ready-mix plant north Hwy. 26		✓
6	Mobile home park north Hwy. 26	✓	
7	Common area Maple Grove Mobile Home Park	✓	
8	Church east Hwy. 18	✓	
9	Copeland Ryder Apts.	✓	
10	Tree lined street	✓	
11	Sidewalk in need of repair E. Hwy. 18		✓
12	Rain gutter in need of cleaning E. Hwy. 18		✓
13	St. Johns Church (owl in steeple)	✓	
14	Unique street lights	✓	
16	Farm implement dealer west Hwy. 18		✓
17	Senior high school	✓	
18	Metal railings of bridge Hwy. 18		✓
19	Jefferson Motel		✓
20	Brick road	✓	
21	Confusing intersection 26/18		✓
22	Peoples Meat Market		✓
23	Title company/municipal building	✓	