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Cooperative Extension

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To the People of the City of Lake Mills, Wisconsin,

The Sheboygan County University of Wisconsin-Extension Office is pleased to submit this report which summarizes the First Impressions program between Lake Mills and Random Lake.

A diverse group of citizens representing Random Lake made visits to Lake Mills during April 2001. The visitation team was pleasantly surprised with the community and impressed by the city square and park, municipal building, and general warmth and friendliness of Lake Mills. They also felt the community, especially the downtown, could capitalize, if they chose to, on its proximity to I-94.

The following pages provide a composite of the individual visit team reports. The Random Lake team truly enjoyed their visits to Lake Mills and learned much from your community. They hope their input will be of benefit in your community enhancement efforts!

Sincerely,

David C. Such
Community Resources Development Agent
Sheboygan County UW-Extension Office

DCS/jds

**SECTION 1: What was your perception before visiting the community?
What did you expect, etc.?**

Never visited here. I expected your typical - a very small town that would contain a few small church, school, and an older area that would have once been the life of the town.

I knew nothing of Lake Mills other than the name of a town. By the name, I expected to find a I'm perceiving the village as an older village, with new suburbs. I see the downtown area as a

preserved, although the buildings are old. I see several churches, a school, grocery store, an eatery. An old mill, a lake, and some parks are also in the village. There is also a historic open only in the summer. All in all, it's a very pleasant town with friendly people.

I thought it would be small like Random Lake.

I was not expecting it to be as quaint a town, rather city, as it was. It was larger than I expected would be similar in size to Random Lake.

SECTION 2: Approaching the community, what did you first notice?

Positive:

Proximity to I-94. Fast food establishments making it easy for travelers to stop off at.
Entrance from freeway is typical.
Neat entrance from North (Lake Mills sign).
Great access off freeway. Industrial park with sign. Convenience stores, wide roads with easy access for trucks to commercial area.
Because of the Interstate, Lake Mills is on the signs for exits. Very easy to find.

Negative:

You notice the dirt bike track when approaching from the east. As soon as you get off the Interstate, no "Welcome to Lake Mills" sign and would have never known about the wonderful downtown because there isn't a sign to point you there.
Visual view from south not too good as you enter.
State Highway 89 entrance - poor. Junk cars and closed buildings give the feeling the town is in decline.
Entrance off I-94 - really had to look before turning left off of ramp to head into town. My car and barriers blocked my view.

SECTION 3: As you drove around town, what were your comments on:

A. Appearance:

1. Downtown

Quaint- antique shops, pharmacy, and a "drug store". Some shop fronts could use a "face-lift" but overall kind of neat.
Old. Some buildings could use some "cheering up".
Main street looked good.

Because we didn't immediately go straight into town, we were a little confused as to which way downtown. The buildings that have had a facelift are great. The new lighting is beautiful. Walkway from municipal building to park is beautiful. Nice lighting, great parking across from municipal building. Back to buildings - eyesore. Side of buildings along walk block not finished match front.
Plenty of parking. Very impressive with library, city hall, walkway, park and benches. For better or for springtime, I thought rather clean.

2. Residential

Typical in some older parts of town where junk standing outside and no finished driveways. Many very large houses that have historic character. As a whole, most yards were already cleaned up for the spring.
Most were well maintained.
Neat, well kept. However, Christmas decorations still up in April???

Older homes - some fixed up beautifully, some rather shabby, just as it is in Random Lake.

3. Industrial Park

Some industries very neat, some kind of junky.
Located with easy access off of freeway. Didn't find sign for all businesses, so I didn't know

was housed in some buildings.

Clean, active, sign posted for who to call. It is unsightly intersection with abandoned gas st and Amoco. Could use a facelift when entering.

4. Parks

Clean and well done.

Downtown square great! Benches, waste receptacles look good. Found a park along lake, nothing special. Nice sign of corner of downtown park with current message.

Very nice downtown park.

Those near the lake need higher rails on little fishing piers.

"Commons" Park - nifty idea. Gazebo, bathrooms, park benches, litter baskets attractive. Sign entry was a nice touch.

5. Schools

Normal looking.

Parking at high school needs help.

O.K. but the parking lot needs work desperately.

First school we found was High School. Not well-marked cornerstone - 1963? I think. Old outdated, no appeal. Metal shed, eye sore. No appeal athletic field. Second school - Lutheran High - nice modern, good looking, well maintained. Third school - not sure if it is or was a s No sign - it was located behind a church.

High school not well marked. Appeared cluttered. Parking lot confusing and needs work.

Lutheran High School appeared much better.

6. Infrastructure

Sidewalks around downtown a little rough in spots. Person tripped twice. Walkway around city hall very nice.

Great green light poles in park area. Sidewalk on Main - I tripped two times because of walk t inch difference.

Sidewalks O.K.

Loved the ornamental lighting in downtown area. Sidewalks O.K. where I walked.

7. Other

Personally, I was disappointed with trying to compare our village with one so much larger. I v rather compare with one more the size of Random Lake.

Beautiful library building.

Traffic moving slowly in downtown on very busy day. Water tower appeared cleaned from far and near. Extra triangle around Commons Park difficult for driving.

B. Signing:

1. Community entrance/exit signs

A definite need

Never saw any. No welcome sign.

No exit signs.

Looked for but didn't really notice. If they were there, they didn't stand out. Of course, I v so most of my attention, when driving went to traffic and traffic signs.

2. Streets

Clean, fairy good condition.

Need more for school, post office, city office, etc.

Easily found.

Clean and good shape.

3. Directions to Hospitals/Parks, etc.

Kwik Trip provided us a map and were very helpful when we asked where to go. No hospital sign or park signs. Directions to State Trails were noticed. Could be better. Didn't see any hospital signs. Lots of parks.

They were there, but not especially noticeable. Did notice signs for a variety of churches.

4. Storefront Signs

Some stood out more than others. Most are nice. O.K.

Most fronts had signs to know what was inside. Some better than others.

Most signs visible.

5. Industrial Park

Signs well marked. Did not see skids (pallets) or other junk around. Metal buildings, flat roofs, nothing special. Drove through an industrial area. Don't know if it was an industrial park or not. Didn't see a to that effect. The neat looking businesses had nice signage. Some of the messier properties could use signage upgrades.

6. City Hall, Police, etc.

Nice building / nice signage. Beautiful building. Beautiful! You did a great job. Extremely nice - unfortunately not open Good Friday morning. We noticed five other cars stop and try to open the doors.

7. Billboards / Advertising, etc.

The electronic Lions sign in Commons was excellent. Didn't see any. Liked the events digital sign in "Commons Park" announcing upcoming events.

SECTION 4: Visitor / Community Information

A. City Hall:

1. Is there a street map?

Yes. Nice map given to me at Century 21 realty office and available at City Hall. Yes.

City Hall was closed. Went to Tri-Par at edge of town. Received a map. Poor map, hard to read. Attendant was helpful to highlight areas as schools, parks, etc. City Hall was closed Good Friday morning. Saw several other people attempt to stop in there. Would have expected it to be open until noon.

2. Community brochure / directory

None. Yes.

I believe map served this purpose.

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

Map included ads for businesses, industries.

4. Recommendations on place to stay / eat / visit, etc.

Had lunch at downtown dine: . Very busy, good food, excellent service.

Bed and breakfast in town.

Could find these by using map and map ads.

5. Contact people and addresses listed if I want more information

Telephone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses listed on map ads - not individuals.

Pick up maps and information at City Hall.

6. Complimentary items (postcards, bookmarkers, coupons, etc.)

Jefferson County area Visitor's guide; Chamber of Commerce map of Lake Mills.

Visitor information center had lots of items available at City hall. Was closed when I first got there, but opened while I was at city office upstairs.

B. Chamber Office/ Visitor Information Center:

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

Yes, I asked a man on the street where it was. He was very friendly and very helpful.

2. Comments on information available

Nice map; good supply of brochures for the area.

Very good map available. Gave helpful information - colorful.

3. Recommendations on places to stay / eat / visits, etc.

Closed when I first entered City Hall (approximately 11 a.m. on Monday). Open when I left - b
lady in charge was busy talking to someone.

Didn't ask.

4. How prepared / helpful were they?

They were closed.

5. Convenient hours

Good Friday - closed.

C. Information from general community (service station / motel / bars / restaurant, shop
employee)

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

Good. Told whom to contact for more information.
One was overly informative - probably also part of this exchange.

Very knowledgeable, not hesitant to answer questions.

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

Didn't need to. The ones I spoke to were able to answer any questions.

Yes. I asked about a historical building and gift shop owner told me who I should contact.

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

Good attitude, good appearance, friendly.

Friendly, helpful, talkative.

4. Other Comments

Was given a calendar of events for entire year.

SECTION 5: General

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

Yes.

Directed us to the City Hall for information.

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

Appeared to be a very good mix. Few downtown buildings need work. Clean up in alleys would be nice in downtown.

No dress shop. Very nice variety store.

No clothing store or large grocery store.

Yes.

C. Are there public restrooms?

Yes.

In the park.

Yes.

Yes, would be nice in the downtown.

D. Pay phones...are they working, phone books intact?

Did not notice any.

Did not check.

Only saw one pay phone. Didn't check if it was working or not.

E. Industrial park...does it look active and attractive?

Could be cleaned up (in some areas, not all). APV - nice-looking sign, lawn neatly trimmed.

Good.

F. What does the community TASTE like?

Cafe at Park was very good for lunch. Service was A1.

Nothing.

G. What does the community SMELL like?
Didn't notice.

Didn't notice any smells.

Didn't smell anything.

No bad odors noticed.

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?
Seemed peaceful and relaxing.
A lawn mower and vehicles.

Busy - plenty of traffic downtown, Department of Public Works equipment working.

1. What did the community FEEL like? (Emotional response i.e. cold / warm, crowded / deserted, inviting, etc.)
Warm and inviting. I felt that they (City Hall and employees and realtor) suspected I was part "1st Impressions" group. Other people I talked to didn't give this impression.
Warm, helpful, friendly, but streets were deserted.
Happy little town where most everyone knew everyone. Active downtown good for business.
Warm and inviting.
Downtown felt very warm. Surprised me after initially getting off the Interstate with no welco

DESCRIBE THE PEOPLE YOU MET

Most people seemed to smile and say hello.
Most were very friendly and eager to help.
The one I asked for help was very helpful and friendly.
Friendly.
Realtor - very friendly, very helpful, not overly pushy.
People on street - friendly, responded when I said "Hi" but didn't initiate contact.
City Hall - helpful to a point - gave me books to look up info. I requested, but only helped v
asked for more help. Knowledgeable.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS / OBSERVATIONS

When you stand in front of City Hall, the view of the back of the buildings across the street a lot of improvement. It's like looking at a slum area.

I found it very hard to compare a village of over 4,000 population to our town. I don't feel
comparisons are fair to our village.
Would like to find a way for people to realize your excellent time and efforts in your downton
Welcome signs and maybe nice banners on light poles that lead into downtown. It may
eventually tempt so people explore off the Interstate.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SIX MONTHS FROM NOW?

Commons Park and City Hall area. I would not hesitate to come back. I was surprised.
The south entrance was not attractive. The school parking lot was bad. I loved the park in the
center of town. A very attractive City Hall.
Your park square downtown, the walkway to the municipal building, and the landscape around
the area.

It is much larger than Random Lake and not a very good choice for comparison.
Commons Park - I loved this area in the middle of downtown. A neat place to sit and watch
people, rest after shopping (before going home), especially for senior citizens and moms with
little kids. Clean.

SECTION 6: Doing it right!

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

City Hall

New condo subdivision

Municipal building

Several parks all nice. Those near the water inviting for relaxing and/or fishing.

People

1. Parks, especially Commons Park
Park square

Well-kept park downtown

Lake

2. Parks

Very nice (neat) City Hall

Parks and walk lighting

Variety of businesses

3. Courteousness of traffic to pedestrians

Landscape along walk and municipal building

Golf course

Cleaned up downtown

4. Streetlights and benches.

Lodging

Very little litter in these areas!

Cleanliness

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

Neat looking little baskets in parks and parking lots (downtown area). I would like to see the Village Board make these types of trash collectors available in our parks and along Main Street with DPW employees emptying them often (never letting them overflow). It might encourage residents to take more pride in keeping our town clean and neater-looking.

First, I'll take a walk from our park through town to vision a way of connecting our Lake Park town and beyond. Second, make community maps to be given out to travelers!
Electronic message board telling community events that could be placed by our Village Hall.

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