

First impressions

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Mauston, WI

By Columbus, WI

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A Program for Community Improvement

Developed by:

Andy Lewis
Grant County UW-Extension Resource Agent

James L. Schneider
Exec. Dir., Grant County Economic Development Corp.

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

Had seen Mauston from the Interstate while traveling north. Seemed touristy and very busy. Expected to see tourist attractions and businesses and lots of people.

Thought Mauston had a historic downtown and was larger than it was, thought the population was larger.

Didn't know, had never been there or heard much about it.

Had no idea, but knew about the bike trail.

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

Positive:

Hwy 82 off the Interstate-lots of hotels and food that were easily accessible.

N. 58 entrance-very attractive and inviting, lots of green; lots of area for development

12 & 16 entrance-very attractive and inviting, lots of green; lots of area for development

Negatives:

Hwy 82 off the Interstate-gaudy, commercial, typical tourist "strip". Too cluttered and distracting

3. As you drive around town your comments on:

A. Appearance

1. Downtown

Lots of people on the street and in the businesses.

Lots of empty buildings, specialty shops or services, not too many basic retail merchandisers.

Good potential, saw activity in a large store with remodeling. Positive potential for growth and filling the empty stores.

2. Residential

Lots of small middle age to old homes. Many not particularly well kept. Much of the residential area looks tired.

Some large old homes with lots of potential, just need a little paint. Some good potential, just need a little paint. Some good potential with a little work.

3. Industrial park

Very nice and progressive.

Looks like its developing well.

Must be prosperous, some businesses were expanding and one road was being extended, looks like more expansion. Many large employers. Very attractive.

Needs some landscaping.

4. Parks

Nice parks, clean, well-kept.

Especially like the park downtown on the river. Could be used as a real draw to bring people downtown.

Were well-used--lots of people playing and picnicing.

5. Schools

Very clean, well kept.

Grouped together nicely, Sr. High and Jr. High.

Good variety of grad schools in nice areas.

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

Nice wide streets

Clean sidewalks, well kept.

Street gutters seemed dirty, but street cleaner was going through.

7. Other

The old hotel downtown haunts the area like a giant cream colored ghost. After talking with people, we were glad to hear of plans for its use.

The library stands out architecturally, could be a real draw for downtown.

B. Signing

1. Community entrance/exit signs

Very nice city. Signs welcoming you to **Mauston**.

Liked the "Discover Downtown" sign.

Seemed to be too many signs for highways, direction signs--typical problems in communities.

Hard to drive and tell where you are or where to go.

2. Streets

Typical city street signs.

Seemed to be different types of street signs wondered if there was a significance, did some signs signify a special district?

3. Directions to Hospital/Parks/etc.

Had a hard time finding signs directing us at first. After several runs through town though, they became more noticeable.

Had difficulty finding the industrial park, we kept going past it.

4. Storefront signs

Nothing really noticeable.

Could have more signs at eye level for people walking on the street downtown.

Didn't really stand out.

5. Industrial park

Sign for Industrial Park was too dark. We passed it several times before noticing it.

Make sign lighter, capitalize on this very positive area.

6. City Hall, police, etc.

Nice signs outside the building. Easily read from the Main Street looking towards them.

Easy to find and recognize.

7. Billboards/advertising, etc.

Didn't seem obtrusive.

I liked the Interstate sign welcoming travelers to Mauston.

There was good advertising along the Interstate to draw people to Mauston.

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

A. City/Village Hall

1. Is there a street map?

Very nice, well put together city map.

Easy to read, shows the things people would be interested in and gives good information.

Well marked with points of interest as well as services such as Post Office, Schools, etc.

Like the idea of including the Industrial Park, makes the map a multi-purpose brochure.

2. Community brochure/directory

Excellent.

Everything you want to know about Mauston in one book.

Good promotion brochure.

Excellent item for tourists as well as promoter for people who may move to the Mauston area. Well put together and diverse.

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

Offered some information regarding business opportunities.

They did not supply us with any brochures or written information.

City Hall was very busy at the time so there was limited opportunity to get information.

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

Offered very little information, gave us some brochures but referred us to the Chamber.

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

Didn't ask for them and they were not offered.

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

Not too many items available or were not offered.

B. Chamber office/visitor info center

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

People had a hard time remembering where it was located, but only because it had recently moved. Everybody knew it was in one of two spots. We were referred there often.

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

Very well stocked office.

Anything you may have asked for was available.

Good selection of information available.

Definitely well prepared for promotion of the city.

Liked the variety of brochures. Had information for tourists as well as community information for new or potential residents.

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

Most information was supplies from brochures collected.

Seemed to really be promoting the Hwy 82 area.

Very enthusiastic about the community and definitely about their future.

4. How prepared/helpful were they.

Very well prepared. Though the Director was not in the office right away, a bank employee answered all our questions and seemed to really enjoy promoting Mauston.

Very positive and upbeat attitude.

5. Convenient hours?

Good hours, we were told they were the same as the bank, which is good.

May need to distribute more brochures around town for times when the office is not open.

Most people were quick to refer us to the Chamber.

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

1. How knowledgeable about the community were they?

- a. Waitress at the Steer was very friendly and talkative about the community. Very negative about City Government and blamed downtown's problems on the businesses.
- b. Shoe stores--good attitude and business sense--wanted to tell me about the downtown and its possibilities.

- c. Many were willing to make recommendations for restaurants. Almost everyone recommended visiting the Chamber. Most didn't make recommendations about things to see, etc.

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

- a. Always recommended the Chamber--no one sent us off with no information.
- b. Hardware store recommended a downtown business that was a chamber member--that member couldn't help us at all, finally got information from a customer.

3. Attitude, appearance, etc.

- a. Indifference--lacked enthusiasm
- b. Not a real positive attitude regarding the city government and the possibility of business prosperity downtown.
- c. Seems like a very relaxed business climate, little professional dress.
- d. Some stores did not greet us when we entered. Seemed busy with customers; we walked through and out without ever being acknowledged.

4. Other comments

- a. Had a difficult time finding brochures, except at the Chamber office and City Hall. Could distribute more to businesses.
- b. The overall architectural appearance of the downtown is a mongrel collection of periods and styles and stages of repair or disrepair.

5. General

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

Many people we spoke with were not from town. Had a hard time finding people from Mauston.

Majority didn't seem to know much. "All or nothing"--knew a lot or nothing at all.

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

Good selection of lodging, easily located.

Downtown had a good selection of retail with clothes, jewelry, hardware, shoes, drug store, craft store.

Nice variety of restaurants from home cooking to fast food and very reasonable prices.

Need more of a variety of retail.

C. Are there public restrooms?

Don't believe I saw any.

Used those in restaurant and service stations, very clean and well kept.

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

Really didn't notice public phones.

Not conveniently located, couldn't find one other than at K-Mart and other stores.

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

Definitely a plus for the community.

Looks active and obviously provides a large amount of jobs.

Well organized and seems to be expanding.

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

Excellent food.

Tom's diner--pleasant atmosphere, good food, excellent staff.

The Steer--good home cooking, ate too much so I missed dessert.

G. What does community SMELL like?

Nothing unusual or bad.

One area had a strong smell of paint or some chemical.

H. What SOUNDS did you hear?

Traffic noise—heavy.

Truck traffic.

Railroad and train noise.

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

Seemed busy, appeared to be mostly tourists.

A little depressed, people seemed to feel negative.

Positive attitude towards the future, could see potential and hope.

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

Very friendly and willing to help. Many seemed to have a depressed attitude about the downtown and seemed negative. Some downtown people seemed to really want to make it work, all were confident they would keep on their businesses downtown.

Very willing to talk about the community--both good and bad

Made strangers feel welcome.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS:

Expansion seems to be in the future, but it seems to be going away from downtown. Expanding around the Interstate is a good idea, but there is real potential for your downtown also, used the river as a possible draw. Very impressed with the new bank. It is very warm and inviting, very unusual for a bank.

My curiosity was piqued by the Opera House date stone, but I had a difficult time finding anyone who could tell me about the Opera House.

Attractive medical center/clinic, impressive, good idea to have them together.

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THIS COMMUNITY SIX MONTHS FROM NOW

Their desire to really promote the community. Their brochures, advertising, maps all show a real desire to "show-off" their solid attributes, both for tourism and to bring business to Mauston. Keep up the good work!

The Industrial Park. I would very much like to see our community with such a well organized and attractive (and prosperous) park.

Had a good variety of retail.

The river is a hidden "gem". Should be capitalized on more.

6. Doing it Right!

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

1. A lot of activity both downtown and on the "strip" Hwy 82.
2. Good brochures, maps, promotions for the community. Appear to be really working to promote tourists as well as residents.
3. Very impressed with the Industrial Park.
4. Liked the bike ride that was going through town. The community seemed excited and were anticipating the event.
5. Business people and employees were eager and willing to talk with people about the community.

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!

Indepth visitors guide. I like the coverage of information provided by one brochure. First step will be to gather as much information, both tourist orientated and community orientated, as possible and place it in a format similar to Mauston's. We presently have several separate brochures that would be more effective in one.

Like the city sign and "Discover Downtown" sign. Would like to direct people to our Downtown. Plan a fundraiser to purchase attractive city and "Discover" signs. Solicit opinions on styles that would be special and unique to our community.

Organize a bike ride for health and bring people to Columbus. talk with the local bike shop to see if there is an interest and if there would be a viable route.